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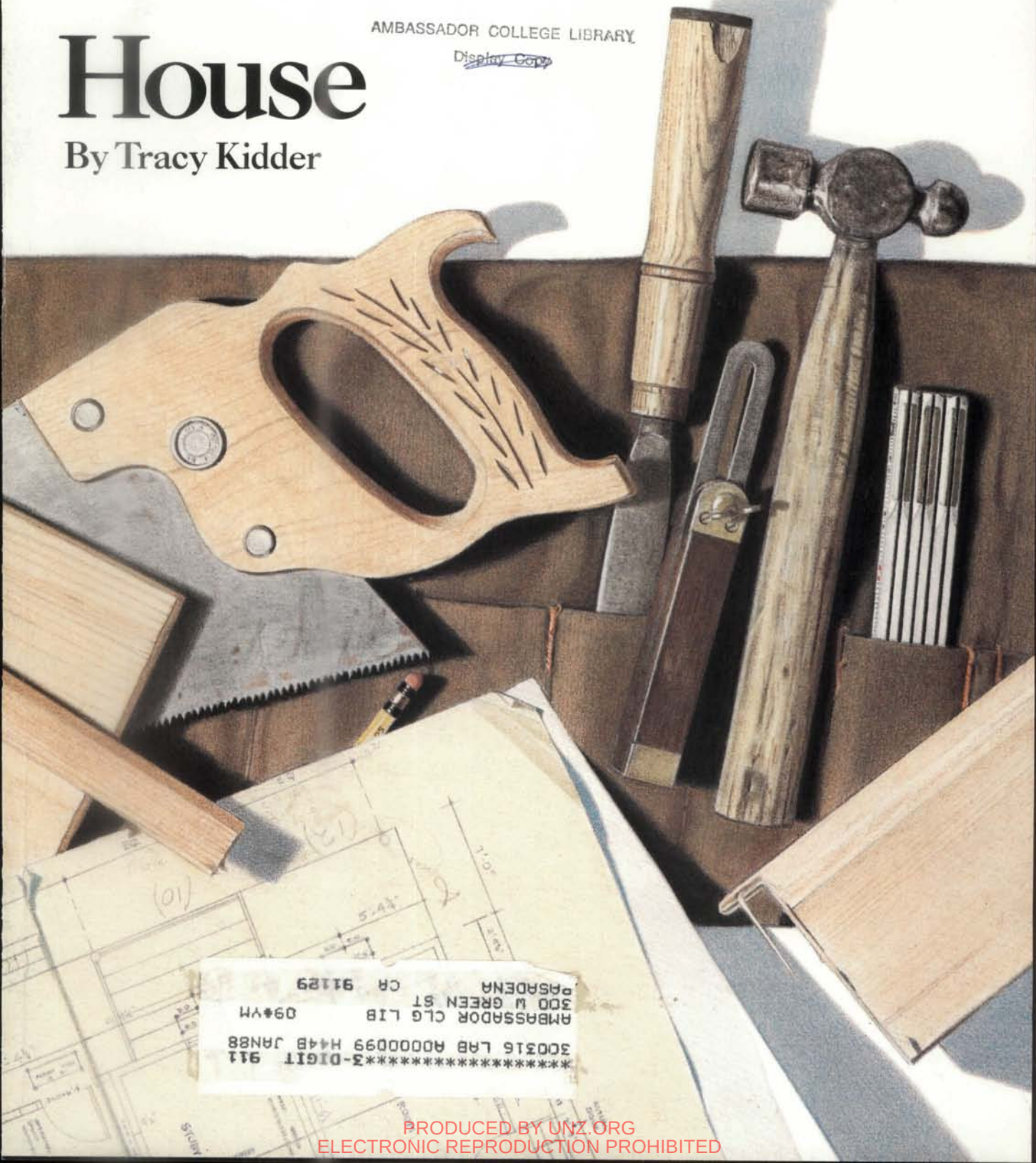
JAMES FALLOWS ON THE U.S. ECONOMY / CULLEN MURPHY ON THE IRISH LANGUAGE

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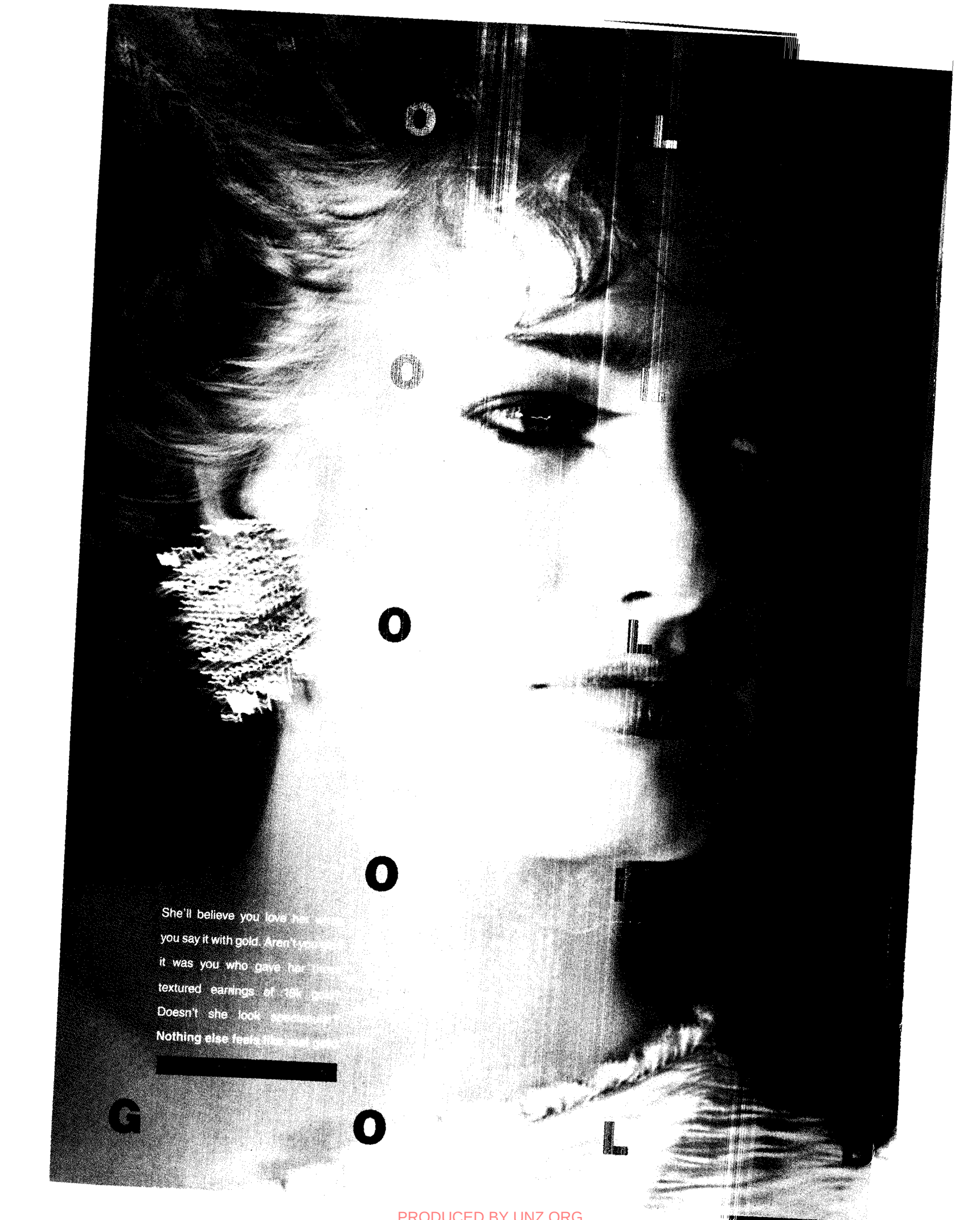
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE STAR WARS DEFENSE

Why is Jonathan Jacky so het up about the possibility of an accidental triggering of a Star Wars defense system ("The 'Star Wars' Defense Won't Compute," June *Atlantic*)? Even if Jacky is correct in his contention that the transfer of decision-to-fire responsibility from human beings to computers will make mistakes more likely, his description of the possible results of a Star Wars accident is misleading.

Unlike today's system, in which an accident conceivably could launch a flight of nuclear missiles to start the Third World War, a space-based anti-missile system that was triggered accidentally would just shoot a lot of laser beams at empty space. Nobody would die, and no missiles would be damaged. The Soviets would have no plausible reason to retaliate.

Since activation of the Star Wars system would trigger a defense, not a counterattack, the dangers of a false alert are mitigated. This is a major advantage of strategic defense, one which has been amply publicized by advocates of the Star Wars defense. Jacky's blurring of this issue suggests either that he has not fully thought it out or that he is tailoring his arguments to fit preconceived conclusions.

PETER CACHION
Assistant Editor
The Public Interest
New York, N.Y.

Jonathan Jacky overlooks important trends in computer technology and argues from erroneous assumptions about the consequences of computer errors. Furthermore, he fails to draw important conclusions from historical events he himself cites. Specifically:

He worries that Department of Defense dollars spent "subordinating computer science to military needs as completely as nuclear physics, aeronautics, and rocketry were subordinated in the 1940s" will cost us our present technological leadership. I suspect that the opposite is true, because there is no reason to suppose that the new technology developed would not also apply to commercial products. In the case of aeronautics, for example, Boeing's predomi-

nance in commercial jet aircraft followed directly from its experience with military programs (the B-47 and B-52 bombers and the KC-135 tanker, whose airframe is largely identical to that of the 707 airliner).

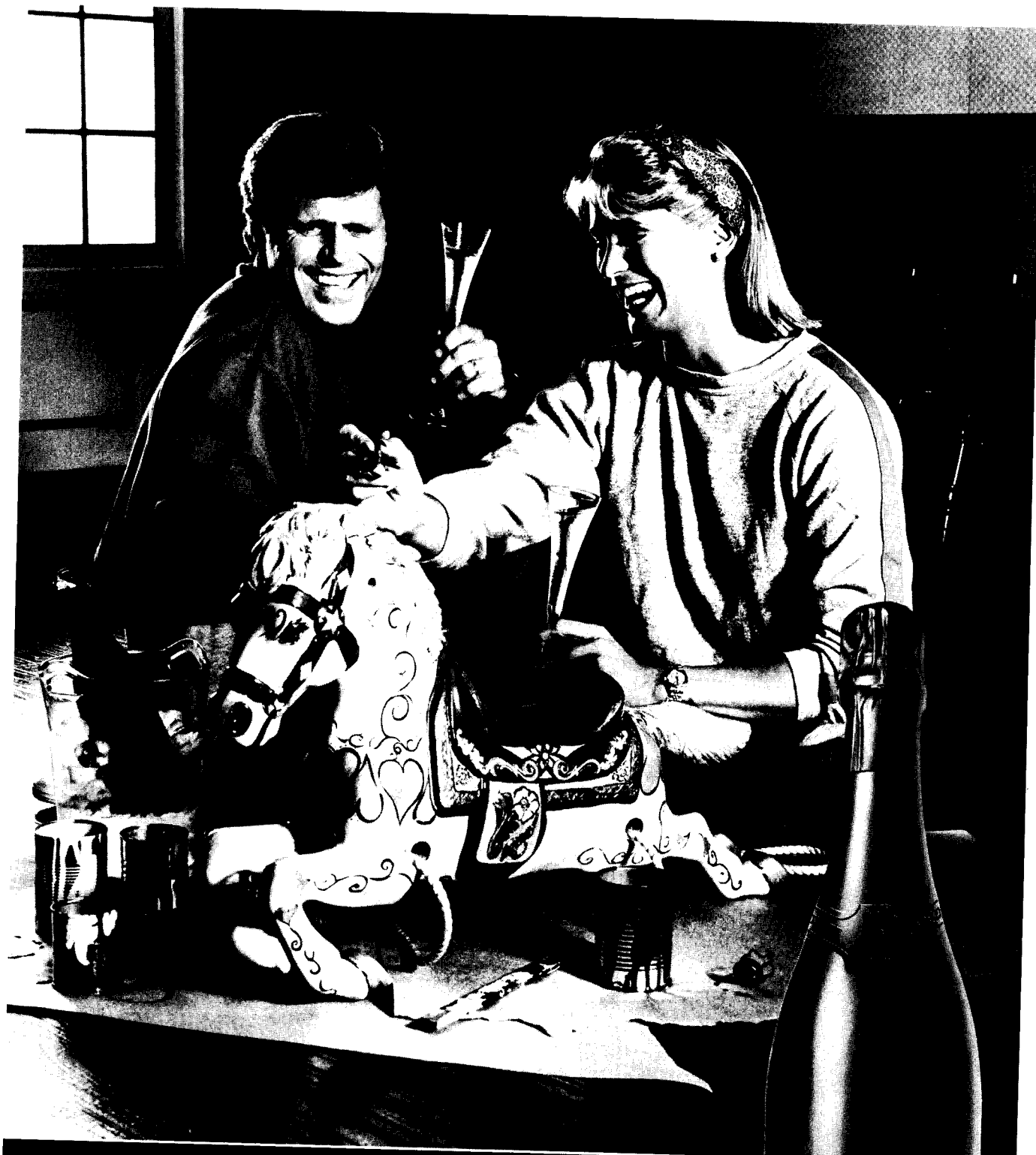
Jacky points out that the system will probably have to make autonomous decisions to fire, because of the short reaction time required, and implies that this is probably a fatal flaw, because we can't trust either the hardware or the software to be reliable enough. But wait a minute! This is a *defensive* system. The consequences of a false alarm would at worst be the useless expenditure of (admittedly expensive) ABM rounds. No action threatening the safety of people or physical assets on the ground would be involved, least of all in the Soviet Union. Since there would be no threat to an adversary's unlaunched missiles, he wouldn't be provoked to fire them. (Why do people get so upset about militarizing space, anyway? Can you think of a better place to have a war?)

Finally, regarding computer technology: the computational part of a defense system wouldn't be a single giant computer with an enormous "single-thread" million-line program. It would more likely consist of thousands of processors handling inputs from many different sensors and controlling a variety of weapons, plus a communications network to let them talk to one another and to human commanders involved. Supervisory programs, of necessity, would have to handle random inputs from many sources in parallel. "Common mode" software failures can be side-stepped by paralleling the supervisory programs, coded by independent developers, running in them. Yes, there would still be errors, but with proper system architecture very few would result in serious failures or system degradation.

One last point. The Soviets are trying so hard in Geneva to get us to drop the SDI research program that *they* must think it has a significant chance of success. They've been working on the problem longer and harder than we have!

FRANKLYN J. DAVENPORT
Bellevue, Wash.

There are really only two methods of avoiding software failures: by test-



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ing under reasonably realistic conditions and by mathematical verification. The potential for realistically testing a ballistic-missile defense system is clearly limited. To some extent testing can be done by trying to simulate the real conditions under which the program will operate, but there is no guarantee that the program will behave similarly under real conditions. The science of mathematical verification, despite considerable effort, has not produced practical methods for verifying programs of more than a few hundred lines. Moreover, there are proven theoretical results that show that the time required to verify a program grows astronomically as the program size increases. This growth is so large that even with a billionfold improvement in computing speeds and the cleverest methods of verification it would take hundreds of years to verify such a large program.

We are computer scientists and our expertise leads us to believe that the system cannot be made reliable. When the proponents of a system acknowledge that it is unreliable, and the price of an error is nuclear war, common sense would dictate that the system should not be deployed.

RAVINDRAN KANNAN, PH.D.
GEOFFREY E. HINTON, PH.D.
Associate Professors of Computer Science
ANDREW HIGGEN, PH.D.
Computer Science Department
RICHARD S. WALLSTEIN, PH.D.
Research Associate, Robotics Institute
Carnegie-Mellon University
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Jonathan Jacky's article creates the false impression that the United States has no civilian supercomputer program. In fact the nation has a significant civilian supercomputer initiative under way. There's no question that such an effort is needed. Our competitive edge in the field has been eroded by the Japanese, as Mr. Jacky notes. And, as Mr. Jacky also points out, most American supercomputers are tied up in defense work. American Nobel laureates have had to travel to Europe to get access to American-built supercomputers to complete their research.

The National Science Foundation is spending \$200.8 million this year as a first step in improving the quality of American supercomputers and creating greater access to them. The most significant part of the program was the creation last February of four supercomputer cen-

ters, which have been financed with \$41 million from the NSF and matching contributions from states and business. The NSF funding is to continue for five years.

The centers, at Cornell University, at the University of Illinois, in Princeton, and in San Diego, not only will improve supercomputers and give business and university researchers greatly expanded access to the machines but will enable students to get state-of-the-art training that is now unavailable.

Jonathan Jacky is absolutely right when he says that we should be trying to develop supercomputers for purposes other than blowing each other up. He should be pleased to know that we are doing just that.

SHERWOOD BOEHLERT
U.S. Congressman
Twenty-fifth District, N.Y.

Jonathan Jacky replies:

Peter Cachion and Franklyn J. Davenport suggest that the consequences of software errors in a missile-defense system would not be serious. In fact the Strategic Defense Initiative has not yet proposed any system in sufficient detail that one can say what the consequences of errors might be, but some systems now under study could do far worse than "just shoot a lot of laser beams at empty space." If a computer-hardware failure or a programming error caused us to initiate hostilities by mistake, the consequences could be catastrophic, because some proposed SDI systems closely resemble offensive strategic weapons. A "homing overlay experiment," performed in June of 1984, tested a missile interceptor launched by a stock Minuteman booster. The "pop-up" system favored by the group at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, including Edward Teller and Lowell Wood, involves firing submarine-launched missiles armed with nuclear warheads (x-ray lasers ignited by nuclear explosions). Moreover, some SDI scenarios postulate the destruction of Soviet "space assets" when hostilities commence: a prelude, not a substitute, for war on Earth. Any of these actions would resemble the beginning of an offensive strategic nuclear attack, and the victim might feel pressed to respond in kind. The Fletcher Panel Report, which is the official Administration statement of the technical requirements for SDI, proposes this "menu of options" for automated weapons "release": "Release only to hit-to-kill weap-

ons, release laser weapons, release nuclear weapons only for defense of own resources, and release all nuclear weapons."

Not all scenarios are catastrophic, but saying that the system would not necessarily start the Third World War isn't really saying much.

Mr. Davenport mentions some of the techniques by which gradual improvements in computer reliability have been achieved: modularity and redundancy. Unfortunately, systems incorporating these features still fail. In fact, some of the most vexing space-shuttle problems, including the bug that delayed the maiden launch, arise from the difficulties of synchronizing and arbitrating among the redundant processors. The ARPANET computer network, a terrestrial example of the kind of distributed computing environment Davenport envisions, was sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) and produced as an exercise in reliable design. After years of successful operation it collapsed, in October of 1980, owing to a peculiar interaction between a hardware failure and a software design flaw. Of course, programmers can just stop the shuttle countdown, or shut down the ARPANET, and resume after debugging; a missile-defense system would not permit this luxury. A key difference is that the SDI computers would have to operate almost autonomously. I will pass over the rather staggering doctrinal and philosophical implications of this and merely note that the system would have to meet standards of reliability far higher than any now in use.

Congressman Boehlert points out that civilian agencies also provide federal support for computing. However, the balance is still much too far toward the military side. The National Science Foundation supercomputer budget is \$41.5 million in 1985, with \$46.2 million requested for 1986. Compare this with the corresponding figures for SDI computing research, \$99 million in 1985, \$243 million requested for 1986, and with those for the DARPA Strategic Computing Program, \$75 million in 1985, \$150 million requested for 1986. The Defense Department's computing efforts are so pervasive that it is difficult to determine which of its figures corresponds to the NSF's \$200.8 million total budget for computer support, but some idea of the imbalance is given by DoD's \$719 million 1983 budget for research in computer science, electronics engineering, and mathematics.

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Finally, Mr. Davenport notes evident Soviet discomfort at the prospect of the SDI. While this is real enough, it does not reflect on the technical merits of any proposal. The Russians see us mobilizing for a vaguely defined but ambitious and open-ended weapons program. They are unhappy at the prospect of spending whatever it takes to break what we build, but it is naive to think that they won't spend it. If we build a leaky defense and the Russians deploy enough new offensive weapons to overwhelm it and then some, we will be worse off than before. The important question is whether the security of the United States finally will be increased after the inevitable reaction has occurred.

SOCIAL SECURITY SOLVENCY

Phillip Longman's article "Justice Between Generations" (June *Atlantic*) is interesting but misleading. His alarm about Social Security solvency is almost absurd. Social Security—the Old-Age Survivors and Disability Insurance program—has two trust funds, OASI and DI. Nearly all economists who are expert in the subject agree that the two trust funds combined are sound. As a matter of fact, the serious "problem" is that they may run multi-trillion-dollar surpluses between 1990 and 2030. That Social Security may run into deficit in the middle of the twenty-first century is of little significance. A possible rise in payroll taxes for OASDI fifty years from now may bother Mr. Longman, but hardly anyone else. If our great-grandchildren may have to work until seventy before getting benefits for thirty years or more, so what?

Why, then, is Longman playing Chicken Little? Perhaps because the sky may fall in after all, though not for the reasons he cites in his article. A well-funded Social Security system won't hurt the economy. But the huge federal deficits since 1982, stemming from President Reagan's military and economic policies, could cause economic collapse by 1990.

Also, Medicare—separate from Social Security in every way except that it's part of the FICA tax—is in trouble. Major reforms are needed soon. Perhaps an increase in tobacco and alcohol excise taxes can be earmarked for Medicare. After all, those legal drugs increase our health costs. Raising their price would

reduce the consumption of harmful substances, improve health, and help fund Medicare.

MASON OLCOTT, JR.
Pikesville, Md.

In an otherwise excellent article Philip Longman's suggestion that we encourage limitlessly expanding the population as a Band-Aid to the perverse pyramid scheme of the government is incredible. Overpopulation is a burden from which younger generations would truly be unable to escape. The answer to the very real problem is, of course, to get the government's hands out of our pockets long enough for us to provide for our own retirement, as almost all past generations have done.

HILTON ATHERTON
Glenbrook, Nev.

As Phillip Longman points out, a large part of the long-term Social Security problem is that recipients view their benefits as earned, rather than as welfare, which is probably a more accurate characterization. For this reason most Americans favor keeping the entitlement nature of the program rather than having checks distributed according to need. Put another way, people who have paid into the system all their working lives want their due.

A simple change in the benefit promise could solve the problem: newly retired workers would be entitled to receive benefits with a cumulative value of the total of their lifetime contributions plus interest. Once this limited "entitlement cap" had been reached, the right to further benefits would be means-tested. This change would separate the earned-annuity aspect of Social Security from the income-subsidy feature. It is a radical yet fair way of resolving the inherent contradiction and restoring solvency.

RONALD BERGWERK
Jacksonville, Fla.

Phillip Longman replies:

Mr. Olcott seems unaware of the contradiction contained within his letter. Worried over the effects of the federal budget deficits, he predicts that we may experience an "economic collapse by 1990." Yet in defending Social Security he quotes statistics from the system's actuaries that are, whether he knows it or not, based on many extremely optimistic economic assumptions. Among these, as explained in the article, is the

premise that there will be not even a single recession over the remaining lifetime of the Baby Boom generation, and that the country will enjoy uninterrupted economic growth of between two and three percent each year.

To Mr. Hilton Atherton, who despite living in Nevada feels that the United States is overcrowded, I say that this is a matter of opinion. In any event, it seems to me that those who agree with Mr. Atherton must, to be consistent, favor fundamental reform—if not the elimination—of Social Security and Medicare, since both programs are premised on rapid population growth. They should also favor reducing the national debt, the burden of which will become all the more difficult to bear in the next century if the number of working-age citizens is declining.

NAMES IN AMERICA

How anyone can write an article ("As Well As I Do My Own," by Roy Blount, Jr., June *Atlantic*) on names in America in 1985 and not mention Bas-kerville Holmes (basketball player, Memphis State) is beyond me.

MARSHALL CHAPMAN
Nashville, Tenn.

Roy Blount, Jr., replies:

As Marshall Chapman (a well-known malcontent) well knows, once you start mentioning basketball names (from Harthorne Wingo to Detlef Schrempf), there is no stopping. Alfredrick Hughes. Uwe Blab. Lynbert "Cheese" Johnson. Zelmo Beatty. Rhonda Rompola. Annie Laurie Witherington. The Southern Connecticut Owlettes. Oral Roberts.

GRAVE NEW WORLD

I am indebted to Philip Geyelin ("The World View of the Right," March *Atlantic*) for demonstrating the accuracy of one of the minor themes of my book, *Grave New World*—namely, that contemporary American journalists are for the most part unable to understand the way the world works, and thus insist on seeing international problems in terms of American domestic politics. Mr. Geyelin, unable or unwilling to deal with the substance of my argument, resorts instead to an attack upon my presumed intentions. The bulk of his complaint consists of an effort to give my ideas a

political coloration (right, conservative, or whatever).

He nowhere states the central thesis of *Grave New World*, which is that the world is becoming ever more dangerous because neither the United States nor the Soviet Union seems capable of designing and conducting a coherent foreign policy. The result is that their international behavior is unpredictable, and third countries that some years ago would have been far more restrained in their activities are now undertaking some extremely provocative and dangerous policies. One clear evidence of the loss of control of the superpowers is that various small countries, from Cuba to Israel, conduct global foreign policies, to which the superpowers are forced to react all over the world.

I argue that this is a prescription for disaster, and that is why I have tried to figure out ways to make at least our own foreign policy better. The primary factor in good policy is good policy-makers, and I argue that since the United States is the leader of the Western world, and since there is a lot of good talent (and a different kind of understanding of the

world) outside the United States, we should draw upon it. I suggest that foreigners who once held top policy positions in their countries (people like the former chancellor of Germany, Helmut Schmidt, and the former prime minister of Spain, Adolfo Suarez) should be invited to participate, along with similarly distinguished Americans, on a President's Foreign Policy Advisory Board that would report directly to the President. This would both help the quality of our own policy and help to train a new generation of Americans. Geyelin terms this "radical" and then says that he does not understand why I believe that such foreigners would be freer of American domestic political pressures than their American counterparts. I had thought it self-evident.

Geyelin doesn't like what I have to say about the media, and I don't blame him. If I had to defend the media's track record in foreign affairs over the past few years, I too would attack my critics' intentions rather than deal with their substantive case.

What I suspect bothers Geyelin most, however, is not so much my criticism of

the press as my suggestion that its influence is now largely limited to the Washington community and to a relatively small number of elite readers. Public-opinion polls—particularly and most dramatically those following the invasion of Grenada—showed that the public doesn't trust the press anymore and is searching for some reliable source of information. This contributes to the poor quality of the policy debate in this country, thus making it even more difficult for our leaders to design and conduct good foreign policy.

MICHAEL A. LEDEEN
Senior Fellow in International Affairs
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

Philip Geyelin replies:

The fourth paragraph of my review describes Mr. Ledeen's conviction that "as a people we are simply not constituted, by the very nature of our society and our political institutions and a general permissiveness and absence of discipline, to conduct a serious foreign policy." Is that not a large part of his central thesis?

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Ledeen went well beyond proposing a President's Foreign Policy Advisory Board; he would recruit foreigners directly into the day-to-day workings of the policy-making process, even into the position of national security adviser. To believe that anybody—foreign or domestic—in such proximity could remain sealed off from the American political process is to know nothing about how that process works. Nobody could have a hand in the making of foreign policy without being accountable to the political figures ultimately responsible for it. The national security adviser does not have to be a candidate for office in order to have to worry about the concerns of those who are candidates—the President, for example.

Ledeen accuses the press of damaging national security by irresponsible leaks—but in thirty-five years of experience I have never heard a persuasive case made, *after the fact*, that a leak had damaged national security. If Ledeen knows of such cases, I would be pleased to know why they have not been prosecuted.

Ledeen says I don't like what he says

about my profession, and he's right. I think he would not like a blanket indictment of *his* profession that approximates a charge of treason.

ADVICE & CONSENT

In his review of Christopher Hibbert's *Queen Victoria in Her Letters and Journals* ("Queen of the Nineteenth Century," May *Atlantic*) Anthony Burgess is inaccurate in one detail. He writes: "What her English accent was like we do not know, but . . . I fear that there must have been a Continental quality in it." Indeed there was. I have heard a brief recording of Queen Victoria conveying greetings to (I believe) the King of Ethiopia. It is the only known recording of her voice, made late in life. I heard it in Professor John Halperin's graduate seminar in Victorian literature at the University of Southern California some three or four years ago. Professor Halperin, now at Vanderbilt University, can no doubt give more-accurate information about the circumstances under which the recording was made.

What is relevant here is that the Queen spoke with a decidedly German accent in the recording—not unusual for one whose first language was German.

REBECCA E. RUMBO
Los Angeles, Calif.

Regarding Anthony Burgess's review of the Norman Mailer "oral" biography ("The Prisoner of Fame," June *Atlantic*) and his command that no biography be done until the subject is dead: has it occurred to Burgess that if the subject dies in his or her eighties, most of the intimates, friends, and associates of that person will also have died? How will that loss help us see the subject with clarity?

C. A. MAYORGA
Glendale, Calif.

I hope you don't mean to imply that the rooster on your July cover laid those eggs.

MARY LOUISE THOMPSON
San Antonio, Texas

The rooster on our July cover is a hen.

—THE EDITORS

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FRANCIS DAVIS ("Music: Ornette's Permanent Revolution") is the jazz critic for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and a contributing editor of *Musican*. His articles and reviews appear in *High Fidelity*, *Rolling Stone*, *Down Beat*, and *Jazz Times*, as well as regularly in *The Atlantic*. A collection of his profiles of jazz musicians will be published next year.

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EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON ("The Puzzler") create crossword puzzles for several publications. "The Puzzler" has appeared in *The Atlantic* since 1977.



REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES A DECENT BURIAL

LAST FEBRUARY the Department of Transportation approved the plans of a Florida-based consortium, the Celestis Group, to send into orbit a flying mausoleum containing the cremated remains of as many as 15,000 people. The 300-pound mausoleum will be blasted aloft within the next year or so by another private company, Space Services, Inc., and is expected to be visible from Earth with the aid of binoculars. The Celestis Group plans to charge \$3,900 for each two-inch titanium tube of "cremains" transported to the heavens.

The reaction to the scheme might have been predicted. "This is the same ethic that puts up a billboard on a mountain," wrote Ellen Goodman, a syndicated columnist. "It's the same marketing mentality that is ready to sell first-class tickets on any ego trip." A circular from the Harvard Divinity School lamented that "our eagerness for transcendence, when allied with contemporary technology, can take on bizarre forms." Editorials nationwide weighed in with blunt satire.

Ever since the appearance, two decades ago, of Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death* and Ruth Mulvey Harmer's *The High Cost of Dying*, deriding the way we honor our departed has been an occasional pastime of an enlightened elite. American funerals are as sacrosanct a social ill as political advertising and children's television. Mitford described American funeral practices as a "grotesque cloud-cuckooland," a cult of the dead "unsanctioned by tradition, re-

ligion, or common sense." Harmer decried the "toll charges at the gates to paradise" levied by rapacious "bier barons," and concluded that the American funeral "has become for many students of the national scene a symbol of cultural sickness." The heavenly charnel house seems but the latest sore.

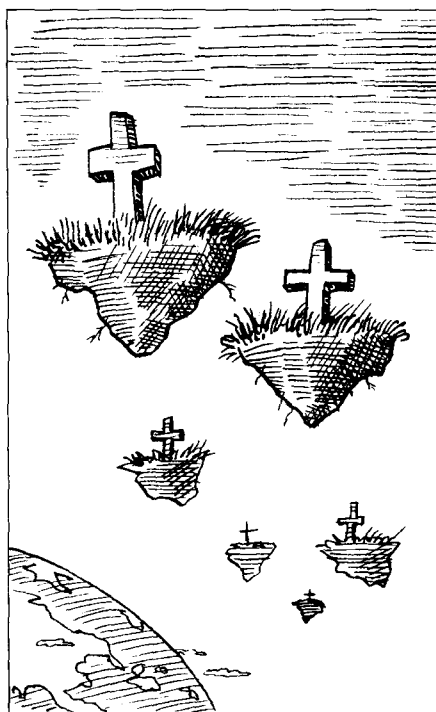
And yet, as one who has disinterred and contemplated more than a few human burials in the course of my daily work, I confess that I have a certain difficulty in waxing indignant over the way we Americans dispose of our dead. Indeed, the orbiting mausoleum in particular strikes me as cause for modest satisfaction.

I am an archaeologist, and to people in my profession burials are important. The remains of human bodies and the personal effects buried with them are often the most important physical evi-

dence we have of a past society. Some ancient groups—Central Europe's Urnfield culture, for example—are even *named* after their burial receptacles. Confronted with human remains buried long ago, the archaeologist thinks first not of the dead but of the quick: What can we infer from this burial about the social context in which it occurred? Understandably, of course, few archaeologists think in such terms at moments of personal grief, when death is close and historical perspective sorely lacking. But after Aunt Agatha has been in the grave for a thousand years, excavators will be able to contemplate the manner of her interment, and that of her contemporaries, with clinical detachment.

When they do, they will come to several conclusions about the society we inhabit. Among other things, they are likely to remark how democratic our procedures seem to have been, how narrow the gap between Elvis and Everyman.

This leveling has occurred in part because America's rich and famous have found that the pharaonic is no longer chic. In ancient Egypt the interment of one or two exalted persons might absorb as much as 40 percent of the country's gross national product; today in the United States less than 0.2 percent of the GNP is spent for *all* funerals. China's first emperor, Qin Shihuangdi, was buried amid an army of 7,500 life-size terra-cotta figures; in contrast, George Washington, America's first warrior-ruler, was laid away in a simple, ivy-covered tomb. When the Duke of Wellington died, in 1852, his remains were enclosed in four coffins, one inside another, and hauled in state through the streets of London on an eleven-ton funeral car. The procession was viewed by more than one and a half million souls—three of whom passed on with the Iron Duke, two being crushed by the crowd,





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and one falling off a roof. By comparison, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the hero of Normandy, faded away unnoticed by the country he loved and served.

IF THE WEALTHY and powerful have flowered their sights somewhat, the common man has done just the reverse. The embalming, the expensive coffin, the hearse-led motorcade, the carved monument—not only are these standard, but every step along the way affords new opportunities, frequently exploited, for variety and excess. That ordinary folk are willing and able to pay for a certain amount of extravagance may tell my spade-and-trowel colleagues of the future something significant. Novelty and ostentation in burials suggest a blurring of class distinctions, which in turn implies a high degree of social mobility and economic vitality. This linkage occurs in diverse cultures and throughout history. Consider the case of early China. During the Western Zhou period, Chinese society was tightly organized into clan hierarchies, and the famous Zhou bronzes were cast to adorn the tombs of clan elders. But during the succeeding era, the Eastern Zhou period, the power of the clans was broken by constant warfare between rival polities and by the rise of a large and aggressive merchant class. Changes were immediately obvious in the novelty of tomb offerings. Bronzes were copied in clay, and then the copies were painted to look like metal and placed in the graves of the nouveau riche. The philosophers and teachers who achieved prominence during these lively times took note. Both Confucius and Mozi scornfully denounced the trend toward social climbing in the grave.

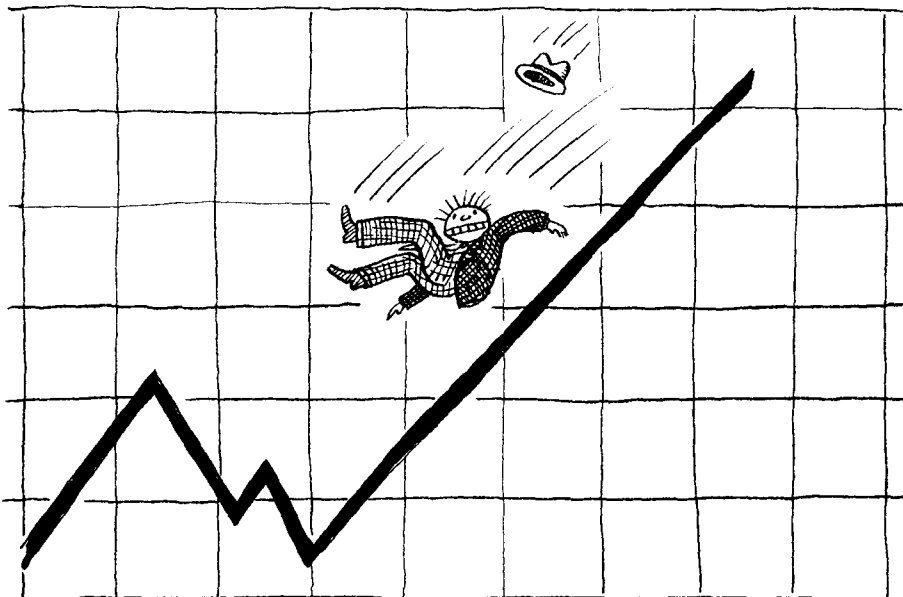
The same sort of criticism was leveled in Victorian England—by Charles Dickens, for example—as the Industrial Revolution was hitting its stride and Britons of all stations were enjoying the fruits of empire. Every opportunity was seized to express elevated status through socially acceptable outlets, and burials were an especially favored means. This Victorian desire for a decent burial transcended class lines. Read the description of the burial of Pip's sister in *Great Expectations*. In 1843 a government board of inquiry estimated that a quarter to a third of all money on deposit in British banks was earmarked to defray funeral expenses.

Throughout history extravagant burial has been a mark of prestige. America's

innovation is to have made such extravagance banal—somehow bringing it within reach of all, even those who cannot really afford it. To the extent that funeral excess victimizes or impoverishes, Mitford and her ilk have a point. But archaeologists one day will also have a point if they infer from the evidence of our burial grounds that America in the mid-twentieth century experienced a prolonged period of garish but largely beneficent social change.

Yes, I am uncomfortable with the American Way of Death. Much of it is hideous, pretentious, and unprincipled. But the gaudy accouterments of death are signs of vitality and clues to later generations that our society was relatively egalitarian and robust. This, to my mind, is the message of the orbiting mausoleum. Alive or dead, it seems to say, in America you have a shot at upward mobility.

—William Rathje



WASHINGTON

THE THREE FISCAL CRISES

Unprecedented budget and trade deficits, combined with unprecedented borrowing from other nations, darken the nation's future

ECONOMICS DOES NOT easily accept the idea of irreversibility. In principle, almost no change is so permanent that it cannot be undone. If people are no longer eager to buy your goods and services, if your nation's comparative advantage has waned, you need only lower your price. It is all a matter of adjustment; at some point—which is to say, at some price—the curves of supply and demand will intersect.

Real life is not always so flexible as economic theory would suppose. For instance, wages sometimes stop rising but they rarely decline, because people cannot stand to live under circumstances in which the price of labor fluctuates like

the spot price for oil. But there is an even more important exception to the economists' contention that what goes up must eventually come down.

Because of the relentless workings of compound interest—the mathematical formula under which the interest earned in each period is added to the principal sum, so that the interest is larger in the next period than it was in the last—when things start moving in a certain direction, they can gain rather than lose speed. A debtor who has a little trouble meeting this year's interest payments will have a lot of trouble next year. Because compound interest introduces a momentum of its own, trends subject to its influence behave very differently from normal equations of supply and demand. By the time a trend of this kind is detected, it will rapidly be getting worse.

The magic of compound interest is becoming the central explanatory fact about the American economy. In three fundamental and related areas the United States is quite suddenly shifting to the wrong side of the interest curve. Taken one by one, the changes are fa-

miliar; taken all together, they tell us something about the economy which we'd rather not know.

The first change is the sudden disappearance of America's surplus in the international balance of trade. During the 1970s the United States managed to sell almost exactly as much to other countries as it bought from them—even though it was unexpectedly obliged to spend astronomical sums for imported oil, and even though foreign competitors had already made deep inroads into traditional American bastions, from radios to steel. The trade deficit for the entire decade of the seventies was \$20 billion. Now things have changed so drastically that the deficit for 1985 alone will be more than \$120 billion.

To make quickly the point that Walter Mondale made ad nauseam but to no effect in last year's campaign: the sudden collapse of the United States in international trade may have something to do with poor management or shoddy workmanship or unfair trade restrictions, but it mainly has to do with ballooning federal deficits. Because of the deficits, the government needs to borrow more money; because it has borrowed more, real interest rates have gone up; because U.S. interest rates are higher, foreigners are depositing more money in American banks; and because so much foreign money has been coming into the country, the exchange rate for the dollar became and has stayed unreasonably high. By most estimates, the dollar is worth about 40 percent more than its "natural" value against European and Japanese currencies. This is the equivalent of a 40 percent export tax on U.S. products, and it has had predictable results.

As recently as 1980 the merchandise category of U.S. trade accounts—which includes automobiles, shoes, and all the other manufactured goods in which the United States has psychologically conceded defeat—showed a \$20 billion surplus. By last year that had changed to an \$80 billion deficit, a swing of \$100 billion in four years. According to Peter Peterson, a former secretary of commerce and a present-day Jeremiah about deficit spending, the decline in exports has cost the United States 2.5 million jobs. Roy E. Moor, of the First National Bank of Chicago, has pointed out that of all the dozens of categories of American industry, only five managed to sell more goods abroad in 1984 than they sold in 1981—and even in those "successful" industries imports grew much faster

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About the Author

Psycholinguist Suzette Haden Elgin has presented her innovative self-defense principles in a variety of formats. She has given workshops and seminars all over the U.S., including verbal self-defense sessions for doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. Dr. Elgin has also created a self-defense tape and a training manual for people who teach her self-defense techniques.

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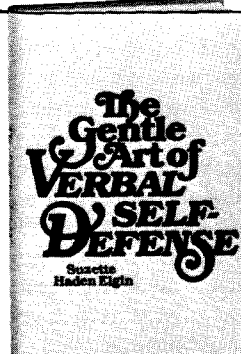
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than exports. The greatest American success stories were in the "business and office machine" category, notably computers. But even there imports grew almost four times faster than exports. Apart from the five successful groups (the others were cars, non-medicinal chemicals, non-food consumer goods, and electrical and electronic products), *all* other categories of American industry exported less in 1984 than they had in 1981. By the middle of 1984 the United States was importing 60 percent more than it was exporting—the most unfavorable ratio in our modern history, and one found more often among developing countries than among major industrial powers.

THE COMPETITIVE position of the United States might theoretically be brighter than the balance-of-payments figures would imply. American companies might conceivably be building efficient new plants overseas, with which they would defend their market share, even though they would not be restoring American jobs. But since American exports have collapsed so suddenly, such long-term investments would be slow to take up the slack—and in fact the flow of investments has been running the opposite way. Rather than sending capital abroad to build new plants and equipment, the United States has started borrowing from other nations, to subsidize its own consumption. This in turn helps explain the second radical change in America's economic position: the virtually instantaneous disappearance of the financial credits the United States had slowly accumulated around the world.

During the nineteenth century, when the United States was expanding its railway network and establishing its industrial base, foreign investors made loans and bought stock to provide much of the necessary capital. Late in the century, when the United States emerged as a pre-eminent industrial and agricultural power, it began to reverse the flow, using its new earnings to make loans and start businesses overseas. By the beginning of the First World War the United States had become a net international creditor for the first time in its history, meaning that the value of its loans and investments in other countries exceeded the value of foreign investments here. For the next sixty-five years its standing as a creditor improved, until in 1982 it enjoyed an international-investment surplus of \$150 billion.

Then, in less than three years, everything changed. In the world as economists usually imagine it, the United States could not have gone into debt as rapidly as it in fact has. If the country developed a grievous balance-of-trade problem, the obvious next step would be for the value of the dollar to fall. The Japanese and Germans, having sold their wares to Americans and bought little in return, would find themselves with unwanted surpluses of dollars. When they exchanged them for the yen or Deutschmarks they preferred to have, the pressures of supply and demand would drive down the value of the dollar relative to other currencies. This, in turn, would make imports more expensive in the United States and American exports more attractive. The trade imbalance would be self-correcting.

But that is not what the Japanese and others have done with their dollars. For a variety of reasons—lack of investment opportunities in their own countries, persistently high interest rates in the United States, other factors whose influence economists are now debating—they have deposited their dollars in U.S. banks and bought U.S. bonds, rather than trading the dollars for yen. Several consequences have followed. Japanese VCRs and Italian shoes seem artificially cheap in the United States, since the value of the dollar has been held artificially high. Credit is artificially easy for Americans to obtain, since the Bank of America can use the deposits it has received from Japanese investors to make loans to families that want to buy Japanese cars. When all the complications are boiled away, what's left is a cycle in which the United States started borrowing money from foreigners to buy cut-rate foreign goods—and has kept borrowing and buying at faster and faster rates.

By the end of last year the international debts of the United States had grown so quickly that they had come to equal its investments. And they kept on growing; indeed, because of the workings of compound interest they gathered speed as the United States moved deeper into the debtor category. By the end of this year the United States will stand roughly \$100 billion in debt to the rest of the world, which will make it the largest debtor nation, eclipsing the Mexicos and Argentinas—and this less than three years after being the largest creditor. By the end of next year it will owe at least \$100 billion more.

One crucial technical measure of the velocity at which a country is moving into debt is the ratio between two financial indicators, the current-account deficit and the exports of goods and services. Roughly speaking, the equivalent measure for a household is the ratio between how much new money it is borrowing each year and how much it earns. In 1982, when the Third World's "debt crisis" was widely publicized and feared, this ratio reached a peak of 24 percent for the major debtors. Peter Peterson points out that in 1984 the United States' ratio rose above 25 percent.

THE THIRD AND most familiar of the economic changes is the phenomenal growth of federal deficits during the past four years. "Deficit spending" has been such a traditional bogey in U.S. politics that it is surprising to realize how modest most previous deficits have been. Before 1980, only twice in America's peacetime history had the annual federal deficit equaled more than three percent of the gross national product. The deficit for 1983, the largest in American history in both relative and absolute terms, equaled 6.4 percent of the GNP. According to most projections, the deficit will remain indefinitely in the five-percent range, unless federal taxing or spending policies change far more dramatically than any politician has yet proposed.

The previous "large" deficits all occurred either during wars or during economic recessions, when tax receipts are unusually low and social-welfare spending is high. These new deficits are much less cyclical. Indeed, the Administration's projections show sustained high deficits despite an assumption that the economy will grow smoothly and uninterruptedly in the future, as it never has grown in the past. Politicians such as Congressmen Jack Kemp and Newt Gingrich, and journalists such as Robert Novak and Robert Bartley, the influential editorial writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, have said that warnings about the deficits are more of the old leftist defeatism. Why concentrate on the bad news, when with the correct, optimistic policies we can grow our way out of the deficit? True, the deficit may shrink if the tonic effects of Reaganomics are so powerful and long-lasting that the American economy moves onto an entirely different plane, like an underdeveloped country reaching "take-off," in W.W. Rostow's famous model. If unem-

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ployment goes below four percent and stays there, and if real growth reaches five or six percent a year and stays there, then the nation's greatest concern will be managing its affluence and leisure time. But short of that, the deficit won't "grow" away. The basic mathematics of today's tax and spending policies will leave a chronic gap between what the government takes in and what it pays out.

AS RONALD REAGAN understands, Walter Mondale learned, and the U.S. Congress demonstrates each day, debt and deficits are practically meaningless as political issues. "Nobody has successfully translated the evils of debt and deficits from the abstract to the real," Representative Jim Jones, of Oklahoma, a former chairman of the House Budget Committee, told me this summer. "Once it's shown to be a pocketbook issue, it will be dealt with. But for now it's all downside."

In the White House and Congress early this spring there was a flurry of concern over the deficits. The Administration's pollsters determined that with Mondale safely interred, the public was starting to express worry about the deficits. But once Congress had passed mild anti-deficit measures, which would stop the defense buildup and cut about \$50 billion from the 1986 deficit (leaving it at about \$170 billion), the issue resumed its accustomed seat in the rear.

The unsexiness of dealing with deficits is hardly surprising. When the workings of compound interest are considered, it becomes obvious why the sudden recent shifts in our economic standing have not yet registered as a national crisis—indeed, have done so much for our recent prosperity—and why they will cause so much harm for so many years to come.

Of the three recent changes, one can be depended on to correct itself, sooner or later. At some point we'll have sent more dollars to Japan than the Japanese care to deposit in American banks or sink into U.S. Treasury bills. Then the value of the dollar will fall, imports will become more expensive, and the trade deficit will be reduced. The main uncertainty is how this will occur. Will the United States carry out its threats to retaliate against the Japanese with protectionist laws? (It may seem quaint now, but in 1971 Richard Nixon's revolutionary package of protectionist measures was provoked by fears of a two-billion-

dollar annual trade deficit, or roughly six days' worth at today's pace.) Will foreign investors decide to do us a favor, by shifting their capital to other nations gradually, thereby decreasing demand for the dollar slowly and letting its value drift gently down, in turn making U.S. exports more attractive? Will there instead be a panicked run on the dollar, suddenly disrupting certain industries and reintroducing us to our old nemesis, inflation?

Whenever and however the inevitable adjustment occurs, the years of grotesque trade deficits will have done some damage, perhaps even of the "irreversible" variety. How much goodwill and market position will the Caterpillars and IBMs have sacrificed? And will other countries be so thoroughly accustomed to our insatiable demand for imports as to have difficulty in adjusting to its disappearance? Bankers and economists point out that for the past four years the U.S. trade deficit has been a powerful, if imprecisely directed, anti-poverty weapon. Our imports are everyone else's exports, so the booming demand here has given developing countries (along with Japan and Europe) a chance to sell their wares. All we have asked in return is that they lend us the money with which to make the purchases. By creating a debt crisis of its own the United States has helped other countries solve theirs.

While the adjustment may be rocky and the damage to U.S. exporters profound, the trend of the trade imbalance has to be toward correction. It is hard to be so confident, if that is the word, about what will become of the country's newly accumulated foreign debts and federal deficits.

From the beginning of the First World War to 1982 the position of the United States as an international creditor generated a steady stream of dividends and profits for U.S. investors. Money deposited in English banks caused interest payments to be sent back to the United States. Investments that helped build oil wells in Indonesia or computer factories in France or clothing works in Taiwan came back to America as profits. Some of the money was taxed away and used by our government; some was reinvested at home or abroad; some was spent on goods from cars to caviar; some may have been stashed in Swiss bank accounts, which pay little or no interest but offer the comfort of anonymity, or simply squandered. Whatever its precise

disposition, all of it was money that the nation did not have to generate by other means. Taxes were lower, government benefits more generous, the standard of living higher than would otherwise have been the case. Whenever the United States had trouble exporting merchandise, the profits and dividends streaming back from overseas helped the nation pay for the imports it desired.

Now the situation is exactly the reverse. The \$300 billion in foreign loans that have come into the country in the past three years have given us Hondas and Beaujolais we could not otherwise have afforded and (to the extent that foreigners have lent money to cover the federal deficit) government benefits for which we would otherwise have had to tax ourselves. In exchange for these three years of subsidized consumption we have obligated ourselves to send profits and dividends the other way from now on. Whatever benefit our six decades of foreign investment represented, our rapidly growing foreign debt now constitutes an equivalent handicap.

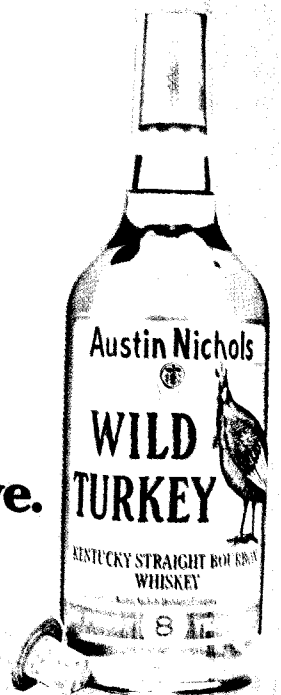
The increase in federal indebtedness arises from the same exchange—subsidized consumption now, in return for a lower standard of living in the future—but is on an even grander scale. During the Second World War the United States took on an enormous debt, in the attempt to defeat Hitler and Tojo. But for the next thirty-five years federal debt gradually declined relative to the rest of the American economy. That trend reversed itself with the coming of the Reagan Administration, and because of what has happened from 1981 to 1985, the United States for the indefinite future will see its freedom of action reduced. Because of just these four years of debt, Ronald Reagan's successors will find it hard to do anything other than meet the government's interest obligations, and the nation as a whole will have more difficulty investing in education, technology, or other sources of happiness and wealth.

In 1980 one dollar of each ten the federal government spent was to pay interest on the national debt. Now interest consumes one dollar of each seven. To put it another way, nearly four dollars of each ten the government collects in individual income taxes goes not for Trident submarines or National Park rangers or even for Social Security benefits but for the premiums on Treasury bills. As interest payments continue to rise, the government must collect more in



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taxes, reduce its other functions, or borrow more money—and borrowing more of course means that interest payments will rise even faster the following year.

As the House Budget Committee summarized the situation, in a report last May:

The rising interest burden makes the distribution of income more unequal; it will eventually lead to higher taxes which may affect economic efficiency; and it means less room in the budget for Federal programs which meet genuine national security, investment, or social needs, rather than just servicing debt.

Already the federal budget is showing signs of being squeezed by interest payments—and, of course, by defense and Social Security. Ronald Reagan continues to talk as if he were holding the line on spending for everything except defense, but in fact his legacy will be to have presided over large increases in interest payments, Social Security, and Medicare, in addition to defense. (Defense spending has risen from 5.8 percent of the GNP in 1975 to 6.5 percent now, on its way to the Administration's goal of 7.8 percent in 1990. Social Security and Medicare have risen from 5.2 percent in 1975 to 6.6 percent now.) The radical reductions have come only in the small part of the budget left over after these big-ticket accounts have been funded. Even though federal spending, as a proportion of the GNP, is higher under Ronald Reagan than it has been under any other President except Franklin Delano Roosevelt in wartime, spending for everything except interest, Social Security plus Medicare, and defense has shrunk. In 1975 this "other" category of federal spending accounted for 11.1 percent of the GNP; it is now 9.3 percent and according to the Administration's projections should fall to 6.0 percent by 1990.

Some conservatives claim that a hidden virtue of deficits is precisely that they starve the government and thereby keep the liberals from dreaming up any crazy new ways to waste money. Twenty years ago politicians were arguing about which programs to expand; now everyone argues about where to cut. If the deficits ever shrank, the conservatives say, those irrepressible liberals would be trying to start programs again.

Useful as it may be for the conservatives at this moment, this endorsement of deficits does seem shortsighted, both for their own political interests (what

greater enemy do the defense budget and lower taxes have than the deficit?) and for the nation's ability to compete economically. Far beyond the effect that the government deficit has on the federal budget, it is beginning to encroach on the entire society's ability to invest in its future. One measure of how much capital is available for productive investment is the U.S. "net savings rate"—private savings, minus depreciation, plus surpluses generated by state and local governments. Since 1960 this measure has held remarkably constant, at about eight percent of the GNP. But after the demands of the federal deficit have been satisfied, there has been less and less capital left for other purposes. For the period 1961 to 1970, 7.4 percent of the GNP, or better than 90 percent of net savings, was available for investment and capital formation, after covering the deficit. From 1981 to 1984, 2.7 percent, or about a third of net savings, was. Federal deficits now consume two thirds of the nation's net savings. Only one third is available for investment in future growth.

Many types of federal spending, of course, result in what should be considered productive investments—highways, schools, hospitals, agricultural-research stations, and even space missions are obvious examples. The public debt might be less worrisome if its growth could be explained by projects like these, which can in various ways eventually help cover their own costs. But today the government is spending and borrowing much more but investing less. The only increases in government spending have been for interest, retirement, and the military. (Caspar Weinberger often claims that defense spending is "productive," since it creates jobs, technical spin-offs, and so forth, but few economists take this idea seriously. Almost any other type of spending creates more jobs. And money devoted to commercial research and development is more likely to produce usable technical innovations—otherwise, how would the Japanese, with virtually no military establishment, have stayed in the technical race?)

FEW EXPERTS PRETEND to understand fully the forces that have kept the dollar rising in value even as U.S. exports have fallen, thereby aggravating the accumulation of debt and confounding the underlying logic of economics. Still, it's hard not to conclude that something fundamental has changed in the

U.S. economy in the past four years—namely, the assumption about how, and whether, we will pay our way.

As the President and his representatives have often emphasized, the United States has enjoyed a kind of economic renaissance in the past two years. After the severe recession of 1982 the United States began creating new jobs and generating new opportunities at a tremendous clip. Income is up; inflation is down; the Europeans are mad with envy. The bath of resultant good feelings helps explain the President's overwhelming re-election a year ago.

Part of the credit for the economic recovery must go to changes that the Reagan Administration deliberately made. Everyone likes lower taxes. Those intangible but undeniable feelings of confidence and optimism have increased. Still, a look at the balance sheets suggests a more obvious explanation for America's feeling good about itself. Why shouldn't we feel good, when we're paying only eighty cents for every dollar of government benefits we receive? What's not to like, when we can buy a dollar's worth of imports with exports worth sixty cents? Everyone feels optimistic on an expense account—and everyone is ready to believe that he deserves every comfort he's been offered, and then some. The genius of Ronald Reagan has been to play to these natural vanities, helping us believe that what looks very much like a subsidy is in fact proof that we are standing tall. Such is the emerging idea of "service" under President Reagan (they also serve who only stand and spend). We will bear any burden, except those that are inconvenient. We will do whatever it takes to re-arm the United States—except draft the soldiers or raise taxes to pay for the weapons. We will do all that's necessary to rebuild the American economy, by getting used to being subsidized.

If we could count on the boom to last forever—if other nations would subsidize us indefinitely in order to create a market for their goods—we'd have no source of discomfort except dreary puritanical reminders that we had turned into freeloaders. Or if we were sure we could readjust to the old ways whenever the boom came to an end, then even as we paid the bills we could think back fondly to a free ride that lasted a few years. But given the ratchet effect of democratic politics—it's much harder to give something up than to keep doing without something you never had in the

Giving...Caring

A proverb is a short sentence based on a long experience. There's an 18th century proverb that says one volunteer is worth two who are pressed into service. That's still true today.

People may give their time, or their money, or a bit of both. This much is certain: Whenever people volunteer, they give a part of themselves. Whatever they do, it is not the size of the gift that is important but the spirit of the giver.

The volunteer spirit has always been a special feature of the American character. The Pilgrims brought it with them when they landed on these shores. Neighbor helped neighbor in the common struggle to survive the first harsh New England winter.

When the West was being settled, barn raising became a common experience. Many families pitched in and built in a day and for free what might have taken the individual family months and great cost to construct. They recognized, as did the Pilgrims, that the worth of the individual and the worth of the community are intertwined.

People volunteer to help religious organizations, garden clubs, and hospitals. They give their blood to the Red Cross and their talents to the Peace Corps. They volunteer for military service. Volunteers are capable of great and unselfish deeds. People have voluntarily sacrificed their own lives so that others may live.

Children volunteer to help the UNICEF Halloween collection. Corporations each year give billions in support of education, health care, social services, community betterment, and the arts.

People volunteer in many ways and for many reasons. All who volunteer act with an energy that can be contagious. Many volunteer out of a spirit of generosity, social concern, religious conviction, or good citizenship. Some volunteer out of pity or guilt.

People may volunteer out of a sense of humanity.

They may volunteer to relieve the grayness in life.

People who volunteer recognize that the moral definition of our character exceeds any sort of legal responsibilities.

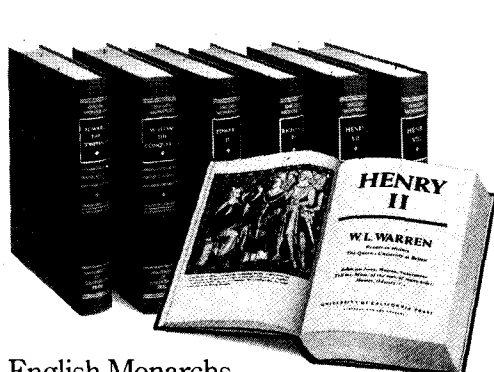
In America, particularly, people are given great opportunities. Voluntarism has to do with giving something back.



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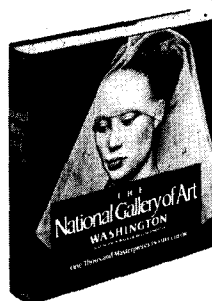
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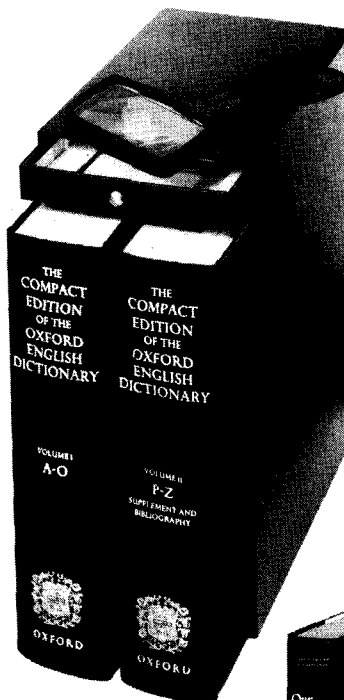
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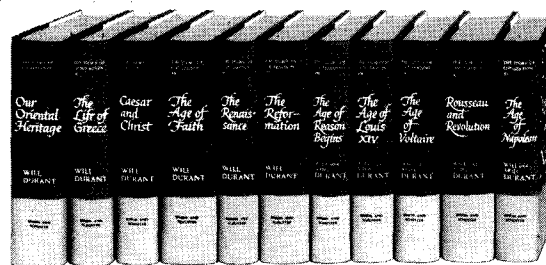
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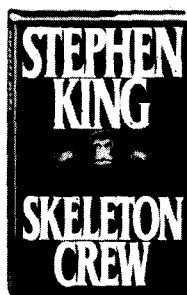
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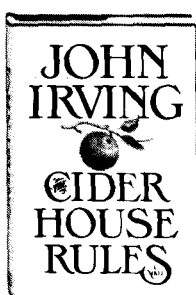
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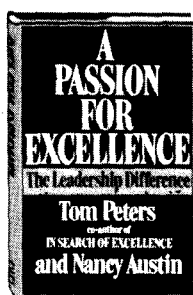
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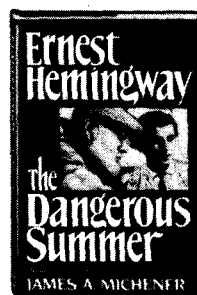
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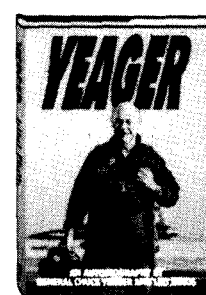
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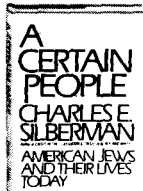
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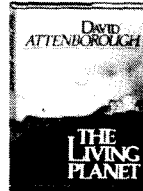
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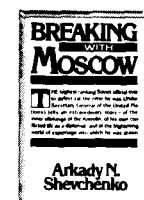
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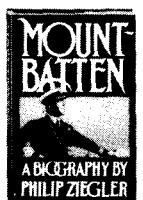
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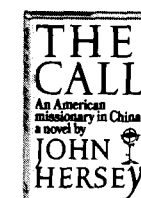
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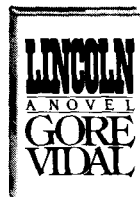


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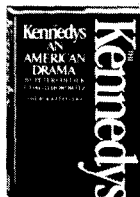


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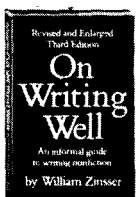
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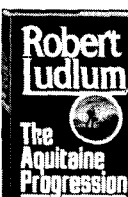
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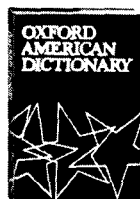
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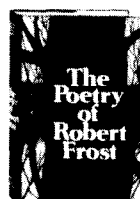
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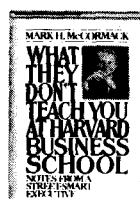
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first place—how can we ever go back to the old days? Given the humiliation of Walter Mondale, how many politicians will run on a platform calling for higher taxes?

The House of Representatives—like the Senate, and like President Reagan—has not made any significant dent in the deficits. But the House Budget Committee at least made clear in its report on deficit spending that the ultimate cost of chronic deficits was “the way citizens view their government”:

In the short term, [Americans] may find it an attractive “bargain” to receive \$100 in national defense and government services for only \$80 in taxes, as at present. In the longer

term they will react in anger and disappointment when they find the deficit must be paid for, after all, with higher taxes and inflation. As this process proceeds, confidence in government and the competence of fiscal management will erode, further weakening the political institutions of our society. That may be the final and most costly burden placed on future generations.

Ronald Reagan’s supporters contend that his Administration has restored confidence and patriotism to a nation that lacked them. Maybe so; but it may be remembered longer for conditioning us to the free lunch.

—James Fallows



LANGUAGE

THE IRISH QUESTION

Declining as a native tongue, Gaelic is expanding as an acquired one. The ancient language lingers on

WHEN I WAS A schoolboy in Ireland, some years ago, my classmates and I would slip copybooks up the sleeves of our uniform jackets before the nine-thirty class taught by Mr. Doyle. The copybooks were soft enough to fit snugly around the upper arm but also stiff enough to afford the deltoids a measure of protection.

The subject that Mr. Doyle taught was the most unpopular one in the school—the Irish language, sometimes

called Gaelic—and the resistance it met would have tried the patience of men with milder temperaments. The class was conducted entirely in Irish, and Mr. Doyle would pounce angrily upon laggards who had failed to prepare for the day’s lesson. His verbal upbraidings concluded with a stirring finale. “*An dtuigeann tú?*” Punch. “*An dtuigeann?*” Punch. “*An dtuigeann?*” (“*An dtuigeann tú?*” means “Do you understand?”) Eventually Mr. Doyle would desist and accept a meek, propitiatory “Okay, *tuigim, tuigim*” from the quaking malefactor. I think he knew all along about the copybooks up our sleeves, but it was important to him that pain, like respect for the Irish language, at least be feigned.

This was during the mid-1960s, four decades after the Dublin government, newly independent, had launched an aggressive campaign, largely centered on the schools, to restore Ireland’s mori-

bund national tongue to its “rightful place” among the living languages of the world. The Irish language, schoolchildren like me were told, was a precious and essential part of the nation’s heritage, one that not even centuries of oppression had been able to eradicate. It was a sublime and glorious tongue. (“Never forget, lads, that Ireland gave Europe its first vernacular literature.”) To be sure, turning a land of English-speakers into a land of Irish-speakers more than a century after Irish had ceased to be the majority language would be a formidable task. But other, “lesser” languages had managed to survive and even prosper under circumstances almost as severe. (“Look at Quebec! Look at Israel!”) Besides, if the language were lost, then what would Ireland have left? How, in any fundamental sense, would Ireland remain distinct from England? (“We’d still be Catholics, yes, but look into your hearts, *a bhuachaillí*—do you see the faith growing stronger there day by day?”) The battle, in short, was one for the nation’s soul.

It was clear twenty years ago, however, that the ambitious effort to revive the Irish language was falling short of its objective. To be sure, the physical evidence of Irish abounded. Street signs and official documents were (and are) bilingual. There were Irish-language programs on Telefís Éireann and Radio Éireann. Politicians as a matter of course began their speeches with a bit of Gaelic boilerplate. At school, instruction in the language was mandatory, and a demonstrated proficiency in Irish served (by law) as an entry-level shibboleth for higher education and a good many jobs. People went along. Yet I recall little enthusiasm for the Irish language among either my contemporaries or their parents, and I knew of no one who used Irish at home. Outside of school, or once employed, there was usually no reason for a person to speak Irish, no stigma or discomfort in letting the language lie fallow. One did not need Irish to transact business with the victualler or to ask directions from the bus driver. When the Vatican ordained that the Mass be said in the vernacular, the vernacular of choice in Ireland was English. “The Fugitive” and other television shows that people actually watched were broadcast in English. Debates in the *Dáil* (Parliament) were, and are, conducted in the native tongue of John Bull.

Some people, of course, were ardent language advocates, and thanks to Ire-

land's system of linguistic preferment many held positions of prominence. Such folk were known, generically, as the Gaeilgeoirí, the term having a somewhat pejorative connotation. (Dubliners in my day called them the "Irishians" and seemed to think that the Irishians were "in it"—"it" meaning the language—for economic reasons.) Language sympathizers wore the Fáinne, a small gold or silver ring affixed to the lapel which signified a degree of fluency in the speech of Carolan and Brian Boru. At my school there was an Irish literary league (membership in 1966: five), and although the school yearbook was written in English, a few pages were dutifully set aside to describe, in Irish, the Cumann Liteartha na Gaeilge's uninspiring recent activities. Some parents sent their children to live for a summer or two with families in the west of Ireland, where native speakers could still be found. These "Gaeltacht" areas, however, were home to only a few tens of thousands of Ireland's three million or so people, and were rapidly being depopulated. A number of public schools offered instruction exclusively or partly through the medium of Irish, but they hardly constituted a growth industry.

The general situation during the 1960s was, in sum, a depressing one as far as the Irish language was concerned. Admittedly, there was a certain amount of passive good will toward the language, which somehow managed to co-exist with a considerable reluctance to actually use it. "Do the people of Ireland want to revive Irish?" an *Irish Times* editorialist asked two decades ago. "There is no doubt at all that, if in the advertising term we could have instant Irish, if we could by some Brave New World method learn Irish in our sleep without any conscious effort, there are few who would not be glad of it." But learning (and using) Irish did require conscious effort, and the effort was, by and large, not being made. The Irish government, in frustration, began de-emphasizing the language issue and dismantling some of the institutional apparatus that helped keep the language alive. The conventional wisdom during the late 1960s held that the death of Irish was probably imminent and that the Irish people had best accept this fact and start devoting their energies to something more useful, like joining the Common Market, or bird-watching.

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hood Ireland is never going to be a nation of Irish-speakers, or even one where most people are bilingual. Nonetheless, though presumably a permanent member of the family of English-speaking nations, the Republic manifests an atavistic tendency that may earn it a qualifying asterisk in the almanacs for some time to come.

The Irish language seems to be suffering the fate of Morocco's Atlas lions, which are now extinct in the wild even as they propagate in captivity. There still exist in Ireland a significant minority who, while fluent in English, frequently speak Irish with family and friends, at home and on the street. As a proportion of the total population, their number appears to be holding steady (at about ten percent). However, Ireland's Irish-speakers are increasingly to be found not in the rural Gaeltacht, where the language is indigenous, but in Ireland's cities, where it has been transplanted and bred; they are being drawn less from the lower strata of Irish society, from the farmers and fishermen who gave Irish its reputation as a "backward" language, and more from the ranks of the middle class, from the white-collar professionals, intellectuals, and bureaucrats of Dublin in particular. Such are the indications from census data and a recent survey published in 1984 by the Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITE), the semigovernmental agency responsible for linguistic research.

"Something happened during the 1970s, something hard to put your finger on," Pádraig Ó Riagáin, of the ITE, acknowledged in an interview last winter. "I don't want to give the impression that the position of Irish isn't still precarious, because it certainly is. But I am willing now to say that Irish will be around, as a language used by communities of Irish people in their daily lives, until well into the next century. A few years ago I couldn't have told you that."

UNTIL THE EARLY decades of the nineteenth century, Irish was the language of almost everyone in Ireland—a language spoken in 1830 by some three million people. Irish is a Celtic language, introduced to Ireland during the first millennium before Christ, and it proved to be durable and adaptable over the ensuing two thousand years. Even the Norman Conquest, beginning in A.D. 1169, had little initial impact. While English would come to be the language of the Pale—

the fortified enclave around Dublin—the Anglo-Norman lords in domains beyond the Pale, though nominally loyal to the English king, easily came to terms with local custom. Many spoke Irish and became patrons of Irish poetry and song.

Four centuries after the Conquest, Henry VIII decided to do something about this lamentable state of affairs and launched a series of long and ferocious wars against the Gaelic chieftains and their Anglo-Norman allies. These wars would continue, under Henry's successors, until the end of the seventeenth century. The Irish-speaking aristocracy was systematically destroyed, the last of its representatives fleeing the island after the Battle of the Boyne, in 1690.

Classic Irish, the medium of literature, withered away, and with it went any "standard" form of the language. A profusion of peasant dialects took its place. Irish-speakers of one kind or another constituted a majority of Ireland's population for another century and a half, but legal proscription of the language, together with Britain's tightening grip on Ireland's rural economy, gradually took its toll. The Great Famine of the late 1840s struck a final, decisive blow. It hit hardest in precisely those isolated, rural areas, west of the River Shannon, where Irish was most firmly rooted. The great majority of the one and a half million Irishmen who perished in the Famine, and many of the millions more who subsequently emigrated, were native Irish-speakers.

Among the survivors, the shift from Irish to English was rapid, deliberate, and traumatic. Irish-speakers in most of the country compelled their children to learn English and refused to speak Irish at home. Reporting firsthand in 1911 on conditions in Sligo and Roscommon, Tomás Ó Ceallaigh, a Catholic priest, summarized the prevailing attitude among recent generations of country folk: "They had been brought up in the belief that English was the topnotch of respectability, the key that opened Sesame, and they were determined that their children should not be left without a boon so precious." The census of 1851 found that only one quarter of Ireland's six million people still spoke Irish. By 1891, 85 percent of the Irish population spoke English only. Fewer than ten persons in a thousand had no English at all.

The Irish language did not figure large in the thinking of most early Irish nationalists. The men who led the abor-

tive rebellion of 1798 were English-speaking and Protestant. Daniel O'Connell, who during the 1820s led a successful campaign against the Penal Laws, and later an unsuccessful one for Home Rule, was both Catholic and fluent in Irish: but he disparaged as impractical attempts by his countrymen to hold on to their ancient tongue.

The catalyst for a Gaelic revival was provided by Anglo-Irish scholars, antiquarians, and writers, intent on salvaging some remnant of the native culture that colonial policies had effectively destroyed. What began as an artistic and literary movement soon evolved into an overtly political one. A turning point came in 1893, with the founding of the Gaelic League by Douglas Hyde. The League, which sought to arrest the relentless "anglicisation" of Irish life, served as both nursery and school to a generation of young radicals. The leaders of the Easter Rebellion of 1916, including Eamon De Valera, were generally League members and fluent Irish-speakers, though most of them had learned the language not at their mothers' knee but by dint of patient study and long vacations spent in the windswept west of Ireland, among poor peasants and fishermen.

The Irish Free State (later the Republic of Ireland, or Éire) was established in 1922, incorporating twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties. Among the avowed aims of the men who came to power was the restoration of Irish to a position of linguistic pre-eminence. Eamon De Valera, Ireland's prime minister (*taoiseach*) for two decades, and later the nation's president, was a passionate proponent of Irish, which was designated Ireland's "first official language" under a new constitution adopted in 1937. The government's language policy came to consist of two main elements. The first was to give succor to those regions of Ireland where the use of Irish had never died out; with luck and money, it was hoped, such Gaeltacht communities would not only be preserved but might even flourish and expand. The second element was to induce the population outside the Gaeltacht to learn Irish. Irish-language instruction was made compulsory in both public and private schools. Only students with a demonstrated proficiency in the language could obtain a leaving certificate (equivalent to a high school diploma), enroll in a university, or get a job as a teacher, lawyer, doctor, or government bureaucrat. Irish,

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not English, was henceforth to be "the key that opened Sesame."

This two-pronged language policy was pursued, with little alteration, up through the early 1970s. It was supported by both of the Republic's major political parties. And it was sustained institutionally by a heavily subsidized network of public, semipublic, and voluntary agencies and societies. However, without substantial reinforcement outside the schools—as one had, say, in Israel—neither conservation nor coercion proved to be a wholly satisfactory stratagem.

There were, to be sure, some signal successes. For one thing, diligent linguists managed to pull Irish abreast of the twentieth century. They gave it words like *sicreoirigh* (freeze-dry), *steallaire* (syringe), and *fuinneamh adamhach* (atomic energy). Out of a welter of dialects the scholars also synthesized, and to some extent imposed, a new "standard" Irish, enshrined by the early 1950s in official dictionaries and grammars.

Where the effort broke down was where it counted most: among those whom the humorist Myles na Gopaleen called the "Plain People of Ireland." One popular novel of the 1920s, *The Boys of Ben Eadair*, was set in a future Ireland—the date was given as 1950—where English, like snakes, had been driven from the land. But Anno Domini 1950, when it actually arrived, did not live up to the advance billing. Most Irish people under a certain age were by then at least familiar with the ancestral tongue. That in itself was a considerable achievement, but there it stopped. Nothing, moreover, could halt the erosion of Irish in the Gaeltacht. The Irish people seemed determined to demonstrate that social engineers had a limited capacity to effect any desired outcome.

IRELAND'S SEVERAL Gaeltacht areas, or Gaeltachtaí, are located primarily in remote coastal regions of counties Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, Cork, and Waterford, but they also encompass a few landlocked pockets as well as a score of tiny islands off the western coast. The Gaeltachtaí have a total population, according to the 1981 census, of less than 80,000, of whom 60,000 may be native Irish-speakers. Perhaps three quarters of these people—little more than one percent of the Republic's population—continue to use Irish as the language of the home. A visitor to the Gaeltacht quickly kens why Irish was able to sur-

vive the centuries there. It is mostly high, rugged country where the roads are poor and the valleys open not on the interior but on the stormy North Atlantic. Until recent times the villages along the coast were linked one to another primarily by boat; the old cemeteries hug the shoreline, where access even from local parts was easiest. There was little here the English rulers wanted.

I drove into the Galway Gaeltacht one day last winter with Alf MacLochlainn, who is a novelist and fluent Irish-speaker, a former director of the National Library in Dublin, and currently the director of the library at University College, Galway. The Galway Gaeltacht is the largest of the Gaeltachtaí both in population (26,444 in 1981) and in size. We followed the coast road from the city of Galway along the northern shore of Galway Bay, through Spiddal and Rosaveel and Carraroe, stopping finally at Kilkieran. This is a thirty-mile trip that can take several hours, because the roads live up to their Irish name, *bóthar*, which essentially means "cow path." Everything from Spiddal on is Gaeltacht country, at least for now, and from time to time MacLochlainn would pull over and speak casually, in Irish, with pedestrians. Did they know a certain friend of his who lived nearby? What would happen if we took this road instead of that one? The replies seemed to come easily in a natural, lilting Irish, but that may just have been my impression. Irish, after all, is supposed to lilt, and in the Gaeltacht it is supposed to be natural.

We left the main road at one point to explore a dirt track that ran up a rise known as Knockatee. Above the tree line soggy mountain bogland stretched unbroken on all sides. Here on the roof of Galway, atop a slight knoll, we encountered a lone cottage, whose ruddy proprietor was repairing a wall. MacLochlainn addressed the fellow in Irish. "Is there a name for this place?" he asked. The man eyed his desolate domain, the only human habitation within miles. "*Slieveeena*," he replied. MacLochlainn shook his head as we drove away. "*Slieveeena*," he explained, "means 'market hill.' Wasn't a trace of irony in the man's voice."

Many place names in the Gaeltacht suggest a populous past. So does the stonework. Between the roadway and the sea the arable land has been relentlessly subdivided into a honeycomb of tiny plots. Ruined cottages stand thickly among them, presenting a low, roofless

cityscape. In pre-Famine times families lived here at urban densities. Farmers enriched the poor soil as best they could with seaweed—one still sees the stuff drying on country walls or covering a potato patch—but even now the land and its people are unsuitably matched.

"Much of the Gaeltacht coincides with what used to be called the Congested Districts," MacLochlainn said. "They were congested even after the Famine reduced their populations by a third to a half. And it was partly because they were so crowded that the language survived in places like this. If these people had been living miles apart, an oral tradition would have been hard to preserve. Even today sometimes I will be driving around in the countryside and just from looking at the fields, from seeing the bad land and the houses close together, I get a feeling: this must have been one of the Congested Districts. I had that feeling once in West Mayo, outside of the geographic Gaeltacht, and so I stopped at a farmhouse and asked whether this was still an Irish-speaking area. And it was.

"The problem with the Gaeltacht, as far as Irish is concerned, was that the native speakers were never self-conscious about their language and therefore had no ideological commitment to it. They didn't think of themselves as repositories of the original Gaelic culture. There was none of the enthusiasm for the language movement that you found among the intellectuals and nationalists in Dublin. The native Irish-speakers had other concerns. To begin with, they were poor and they lived on marginal land. Just look at these fields!" MacLochlainn indicated the terrain on both sides of the road. It had been raining all day long and in each field water was trapped on the surface by the bedrock just below. In the wide, shimmering pools, archipelagos of potato-sized rocks interfered with a wind-driven ripple of waves. "You could buy this land very cheap now. If you can't get it by the acre you might try by the gallon."

THE GALWAY GAELTACHT, like the other Gaeltachtaí, was an exporter of people for a century and a half—a trend reversed only in recent years. The Irish-speakers who remain there have done so at least in part because the Irish government since the 1920s has sought assiduously to make it worth their while. It provides generous subsidies: subsidies for each child brought up speaking



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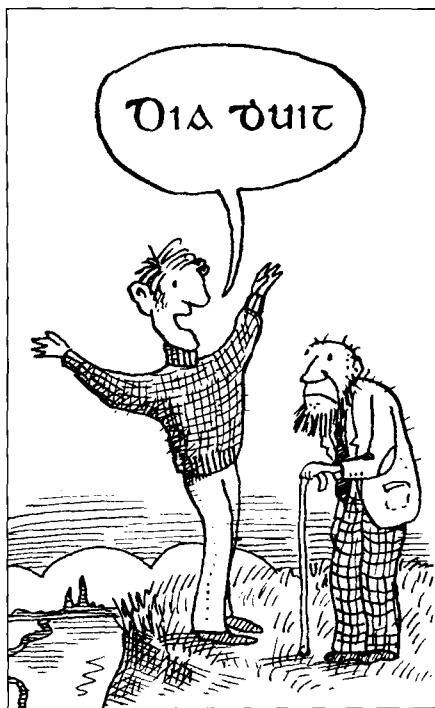
Irish and additional subsidies when those children start attending school; subsidies to buy pigs and cattle; subsidies to improve housing and install running water and flush toilets. Unlike in other rural areas of Ireland, in the Gaeltacht thatched cottages are rare; most homes now boast newer roofs of tin or asphalt. Many families in the Gaeltacht shelter language students from the Galltacht—the English-speaking areas—during the summer months. For each of these *scoláirí* families receive a stipend of £2.25 a day from the government. If a family needs to enlarge its house to make room for summer students, it is eligible for financial assistance. Dublin's largesse is administered by Roinn na Gaeltachta, the Ministry of the Gaeltacht.

Several semi-independent agencies operate under the ministry's aegis. One of these is the Bord na Gaeilge, the Irish Language Board, established in 1978. To the Bord falls the job, essentially, of consciousness-raising—"winning the free and willing co-operation of the Irish public in furthering Irish as a living language." The Bord na Gaeilge maintains a high profile on a low budget. A far more conspicuous presence in the Irish-speaking areas, however, is the Údarás na Gaeltachta, the Gaeltacht Authority, created in 1979. The Údarás is responsible for luring jobs and industry into the Irish-speaking areas, with the aim of making Irish-speakers prosperous and content in their natural habitat. An earlier agency, Gaeltarra Éireann, had initially sought to accomplish this purpose by promoting cottage industries. The Údarás was set up in the late 1970s, when it became plain that the prospect of a lifetime spent knitting sweaters or fashioning little donkeys out of turf was not incentive enough to keep Gaeltacht youths on the reservation. (The word "reservation" creeps frequently into discussions of the Gaeltacht, only to be summarily retracted in a manner that recalls a line from Yeats: "God forgive! My body spake, not I!")

Headquartered in a sleek modern building in the Galway Gaeltacht town of Furbo, the Údarás provides hefty grants-in-aid for new buildings and equipment, subsidizes rent paid on factories that the government may have built to a manufacturer's specifications, and underwrites the cost of employee training. To date, some eighty industrial enterprises, large and small, have been planted in the various Gaeltachtaí. The industrial parks and modern factories are

hard to miss. Surgical stockings are made at Carraroe, ophthalmic lenses at Casla, cosmetics at Carna. In the harbor at Rosaveel, French merchantmen are docked alongside a French-owned fish-processing plant.

Dublin's efforts have brought a degree of affluence to the Gaeltacht—enough, at any rate, to prompt considerable grousing outside it about Ireland's home-grown version of affirmative action. As an anti-poverty program the government's Gaeltacht policies have been crudely effective. The 1981 census showed an increase over the preceding decade in the number of people inhabiting Gaeltacht areas. But the very mechanism designed to curb the exodus may



also be hastening the decline of the Gaeltachtaí as Irish-speaking enclaves.

I brought the matter up at a late-afternoon tea that Alf MacLochlainn had arranged with some friends in Kilkieran. The house that Peggy O'Connell shares with her two sisters, on a scarp above the water, is destined to lose its battle with the winds and tides of Kilkieran Bay. For the time being it seemed secure against the storm, made temperate inside by the warming fires of turf and whiskey. One of the guests was John Jennings, who was born in the Galway Gaeltacht and has taught in local Irish-language primary schools for almost three decades. He did not lament the economic improvements in the Gaeltacht but he noted that the region's gradual integration into the

rest of the Republic, together with the relative prosperity of the past decade, had accelerated an erosion not only in the quantity of Irish used by native-speakers but also in the quality.

"When I first started teaching," Jennings said, "I enjoyed reading the essays of the children. In vivid Irish they would paint a whole tableau about something as simple as a visit to the beach. Today it's 'I went, I saw, I came home.' I have a fellow in class now whose grandfather gave two hundred and twelve Irish-language songs to the National Folklore Commission. The grandfather could entertain you from morning till night, at home or in the pub. Everyone wanted to be around him. But his grandson can only say, 'Yeah, no, yeah, no.'"

"Irish lived on in these parts because of the isolation, but the isolation is not so complete anymore. Storytelling and the love of words are no longer the only amusements. The newer amusements usually involve English. When jobs came to the Gaeltacht, many young people who had emigrated came back. Sometimes they brought English or American wives who had no Irish. The men who run the factories, and their families, usually have no Irish. Every year brings more and more people into the Gaeltacht who can speak only English. And the Irish-speakers think they can have the best of both worlds. They recognize the quid pro quo and keep up their Irish so they can get the subsidy for the bull, the subsidy for the sow, the subsidy for the house. But many of them use English at home and many of the children use English with one another. It's a matter of economic calculation."

On the time-long, distance-short drive back to Galway, MacLochlainn spoke of the upcoming election for the governing board of the Údarás na Gaeltachta. The Minister of the Gaeltacht appoints six of its thirteen members, but Gaeltacht residents vote for the other seven. Gaeltacht areas are defined geographically, like ZIP codes, and what has been happening in the Irish-speaking communities, MacLochlainn explained, was starkly evident in the conduct of the election. "The signs on the telephone poles are written in both Irish and English," he said. "The advertisements in the newspapers are in both languages."

He passed me a Galway newspaper as evidence; it was hard to read as his car lurched along the buckling, pitted road. In their platforms the candidates said little about the Irish language but quite a

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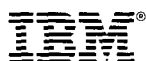
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Once a reputation reaches legendary proportions, fact and fiction tend to blur. In the case of George Gordon Noel Byron, a great deal is known but details are shadowy. He did move to Venice permanently in 1817. He was young and lame and handsome, and already notorious. The details of his infatuation with Sambuca Romana are harder to pin down.

It is said he first encountered this suave and elegant liqueur on an earlier visit to Rome, where it was, and still is, concocted from the berries of the wild elderbush. Smooth and mellow, with a fiery heart and an undercurrent of wildness, it soon became a passion. A passion equal to or surpassing an earlier love for coffee. If these things are so, we can be certain he indulged both pleasures while in Venice. The opportunities were there.

The story is told that it was in a Venetian cafe, early for a rendezvous, that he first ordered the two drinks at one time. His coffee arrived and, just as he saw his contessa stepping from her gondola, the liqueur. As he started to his feet, somehow jostling the waiter, the Sambuca Romana spilled, into the coffee. There was time for only one sip. He sipped, considered a moment, then sat down to finish the cup at his leisure.

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lot about the condition of Gaeltacht roads. One maverick, Peadar Ó Tuathail, had recently served time in Dublin's Mountjoy Prison for refusing to pay his car tax. I learned later that Ó Tuathail won office handily, so perhaps the Gaeltacht will be getting a few roads resurfaced. As for the Irish language, the Bord na Gaeilge recently concluded that "at this stage only emergency measures will ensure that the Gaeltacht areas will survive even at their present strength until the end of the century."

ACROSS THE ISLAND, on the other side of the Bog of Allen, the capital of the Irish Republic presents something of a contrast. Dublin was never wholly an Irish-speaking city. It was founded by Vikings, in the eighth century A.D., and it remained in the hands of the Norse until their distant cousins, the Normans, made it the capital of Anglo-Norman Ireland. In Georgian times Dublin was the second largest city in the British Isles. It is a haunting, lively place but overall hardly a charming one. North of the River Liffey the city has been deteriorating for decades. The city south of the river, always the capital's more prosperous half, has fared better. Ireland enjoyed an economic boom throughout the 1970s, and it shows in both the buildings and the costume. The women in particular are attired boldly and stylishly. Although male fashions tend toward the drab, at least outwardly, I inferred after a game at one of the city's new racquet clubs that designer underwear must be enjoying brisk sales. Not coincidentally, perhaps, the Bord na Gaeilge, in a recent promotional campaign, drew an explicit connection between dressing well and speaking Irish. The Bord's advertisement featured a large photograph of a smartly dressed young woman admiring herself in a new hat. "You never know how well something suits you," the text began, "until you try it. A new fashion . . . a different colour . . . your own language."

Merrion and Fitzwilliam squares lie at the heart of Georgian Dublin, and much of the Irish-language establishment has found lodging in the refurbished row houses of this elegant part of town. The Bord na Gaeilge is here, and the Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann; the Gaeltacht Ministry is but a few minutes away. At 27 Merrion Square are the editorial offices of *Anois*, a new Irish-language Sunday tabloid with a circulation of 30,000. Throughout Dublin there exist several

hundred organizations promoting Irish in one way or another.

Cynics disparage the Gaeilgeoirí as an elite and self-perpetuating caste. There was and is a grain of truth to such charges, as there always seems to be whenever public policy anywhere sets aside a portion of the national treasury to promote one kind of behavior, however laudable, over another. But the force of such criticism has diminished since 1973, when the government discarded proficiency in Irish as a prerequisite for obtaining either a leaving certificate or a government job. (One still needs Irish to attend the national university or a professional school, and the Gaeilgeoirí contingent in academe seems determined to hold the line.) While Irish-language instruction remains mandatory for all students at every grade level, the state in many other respects has drawn back from coercion. The Irish question has thus in some measure been depoliticized.

And as it has been depoliticized, a goodly number of Dubliners seem to have decided that the Irish language is quite serviceable, that it suits them well indeed. No one is quite sure what that number is—10,000 people? 30,000? 50,000?—but a friend, who teaches at University College, Dublin, speaks of the emergence of a sort of urban Gaeltacht. The urban Gaeltacht does not consist of tangible, geographically defined communities, but it is no less real. It is characterized by social networks of families and friends, many of them close-knit and durable. The urban Irish-speakers tend to be drawn from the highest socio-economic groups rather than willy-nilly from all classes of society. With the Gaeltacht succumbing to a perhaps terminal malaise, the Irish language is manifesting a distinctly New Class aura. One Irish-language specialist, Hilary Tovey, reported a few years ago, "Language revivalists are beginning to say that while the Gaeltacht is still important, it may be what happens in Dublin over the next decade will be the deciding factor for the fate of the language."

There were, of course, always good reasons why city-dwellers might find Irish attractive. Outside of the Gaeltacht, proficiency in Irish has always brought preferment—and therefore correlated highly with upward mobility. It still does. One won't find many Irishians among small-town retailers or blue-collar workers anywhere in Ireland. One

finds them among that class of people who were brought up to realize that proficiency in Irish—at least, proficiency at age eighteen—was something of a boon. But why continue (or, for that matter, start) using the language at home? The answer doubtless involves the country's growing acquaintance with Europe, with electronics, and with ecumenism—and therefore leads to another, more fundamental question, What makes us Irish? There is real concern in Ireland about the identity issue, one that the Irish in America, comfortable in their ethnicity, rarely have to face.

"Basically," Pádraig Ó Riagáin, of the ITE, told me, "the government by the mid-sixties was growing tired of the whole language issue. It kept up a commitment to the Gaeltacht, but as far as the general public was concerned it pressed many of the laws on the books less than forcefully. Essentially, the government's attitude was, 'We're not going to experiment anymore. If the public want the Irish language, they can have it, but they'll have to convince us that they want it.' In effect, the state during the sixties and early seventies was realigning itself with what it perceived to be popular opinion. It pulled back in the educational system. Schools where Irish was the medium of instruction, and where children tended to become most proficient in the language, were turned into ordinary public schools. There were more than two hundred Irish-language primary schools outside the Gaeltacht in the early 1960s. That number had dropped to fewer than twenty by the mid-1970s.

"And then the situation started to turn around. There has always been a large element which passively supported the state's efforts as far as the language was concerned, and identified with the state's objectives, but which otherwise wasn't very actively involved. Now, with the state pulling back, the pressure was on. You started getting a new interest in schools. This was not a predicted outcome. Parents began withdrawing their children from the ordinary schools, where Irish was just a course, and setting up new schools, where instruction of all kinds was in Irish. There are twelve of these schools in Dublin now, and half of them were set up since the mid-1970s. My own children go to Scoil Lorcáin, in Monkstown. Sure, they get a bit of ragging from some of their friends in the neighborhood, but there are two other families on our street with children in

the same school. And having Irish gives a child a certain advantage, like being able to talk to your brother or sister about someone else in a language that other person doesn't understand."

I took a bus out to Monkstown, which is twenty minutes from the city center, out along the southern shore of Dublin Bay. The neighborhood is an affluent one of stucco houses with lush gardens behind high walls or hedges. Palm trees grow on many properties—an anomalous presence in a country that looks directly across the sea at Labrador. Scoil Lorcáin is situated on a Monkstown hillside, with a view of the bay. It looks from the outside like any modern elementary school in the Western world. Inside, the walls are brightly decorated with children's drawings and colorful posters. The only obvious difference between Scoil Lorcáin and a private school in the United States is that the language of instruction, play, crisis, anger, and bliss happens to be Irish. There are 400 students in Scoil Lorcáin, and there is a long waiting list for admission.

Róisín Carwood, who has been the principal there since 1976, took me around the building. Carwood is a native Irish-speaker from Kilkieran. Her husband is a Dubliner who started studying the language seriously at the age of seventeen. Irish is the language of their home. Carwood is a pleasant, relaxed woman—a teacher, not a zealot—and she seems to have an easy way with both the children and the staff. "Most of our pupils do not know Irish when they come here, but they are speaking fluently within a few months," Carwood explained. "After a child is enrolled, we expect his parents to begin using Irish at home. With English all around us, that is the only way we can hope to instill the language. If a child is heard speaking English in school, we call in the parents right away. You have to nip this in the bud, or it will spread throughout the school. We get a lot of cooperation. Obviously, parents are interested in the language, or they wouldn't send their children here. But beyond that, they know we provide a good education. Irish-language schools have a reputation for quality because the commitment of their teachers is so high."

Carwood took me in and out of several classrooms. The children stood at our approach and answered questions, in Irish, put to them by the principal. "*An bhfuil tú ag obair go dian?*" ("Are you working hard?") "*Sea!*" came the affir-

mative reply, in unison. "*Cé mhéid díbh a bhí riamh i Meiriceá?*" ("How many of you have ever been to America?") A score of hands went up.

Irish-language schools generally boast a low student-teacher ratio and are reputedly less authoritarian than other schools in the Republic. In one class I visited at Scoil Lorcáin, a rather free-form dramatic presentation was about to begin. The children were milling about, jabbering in Irish, indulging in horseplay. They wore costumes. One lad displayed a bicycle helmet covered in tinfoil. Another had a box over his head with holes cut out for eyes. A third was resplendent in a black cape and black mask. (When asked by Carwood, he gave his name as Darth Vader.) The teacher explained that the play was about astronauts and outer space. "The traditional language and literature of Irish is centered on the farm," she said. "If we're going to expect the children to use Irish in their daily lives, we have to expand its range. So we spend a lot of time doing things like this." The range of Irish has expanded to embrace, among many other words, *okay*, which I heard being used continually at Scoil Lorcáin by both teachers and students. Since Irish has no real word for *yes* (*sea*, which is the colloquial substitute, actually means "it is"), this neologism seems marginally justified.

The day I visited Scoil Lorcáin was also a day for teacher-parent conferences. As I waited at the bus stop to be taken back to Dublin, a mother and her daughter walked by. I had seen the woman collecting the child at the school. They were laughing together, and as they went past I realized that they were speaking Irish. Their happy, bonded chatter was unselfconscious and utterly disarming.

How long vignettes like that will be a part, even a small, coddled part, of the Irish scene remains a matter of conjecture. But the Irish people seem to want the language to survive, and a majority seem willing to put up with a certain amount of inconvenience if a minority will use a certain amount of Irish. Speaking Irish may be Ireland's version of living on a kibbutz—hardly appropriate for a whole population but somehow fundamental to the character of the country. By using Irish, novelist Máirtín Ó Cadhain once wrote, "I carry around two thousand years of that dirty old sow which is Ireland."

—Cullen Murphy

THE LAST HISTORY EVER OF FATIGUE IN TEXAS

BY WILLIAM C. GRUBEN

THE READER is advised to pay close attention to this history, because no others on the subject will ever be written. While this is not the writer's decision, he agrees that it is all for the best. Nevertheless, it is a sad state of affairs when so modest a summary must be the final statement on fatigue in Texas.

Like oil, fatigue existed in Texas long before its commercial possibilities were appreciated. The Tejas Indians had seven different words for *tired*, and the Lipan Apaches had twenty-two, not counting words used only in secret ceremonies. These last will never be known. Some Indians had no actual words for *tired* but did have as many as forty-one different ways to look tired.

The early Spaniards brought to Texas a large vocabulary of words for *tired*. Later they invented new phrases to describe varieties of fatigue not experienced in the old country, such as "tired of mountain lions and bears," "tired of rattlesnakes," and "generally tired of Texas."

The Anglo-Saxon settlers also devised new phrases to describe the peculiarities of exhaustion in Texas. In addition, they worked out a series of hand gestures, signs, and finger movements that allowed them to depict fatigue at times when they were too tired to talk about it. A proficient settler could close his mouth, close his eyes, lie flat on his back, and still tell his friends that he was tired, through the judicious use of just one finger. Modern Texans have been unable to improve upon this mode of communication, although it was developed more than a hundred and fifty years ago.

The Anglo-Saxon settlers greatly increased fatigue in Texas, however, because they often prevented Indians from

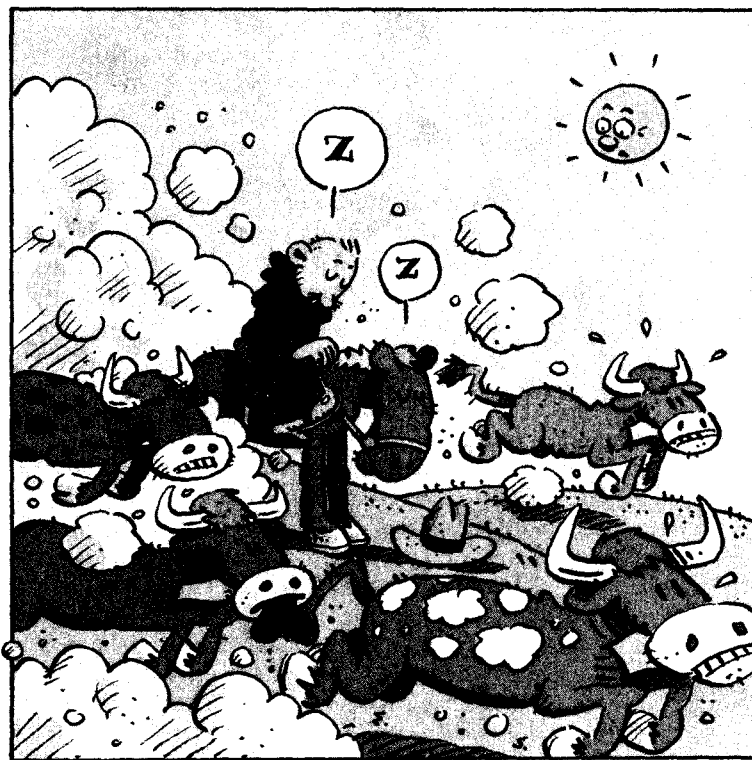
getting a good night's sleep. The Indians responded in kind. Sometimes one of these groups would be up all night making loud noises, as revenge for what the other had done the night before. The Indians improvised percussion instruments from hollow logs and would work in shifts to keep the settlers awake. The Anglo-Saxon settlers organized all-night watches, during which they fired rifles into the air. The women would

invention of the swing shift resulted in many sleepless nights and led to the state's first fatigue-related commercial enterprise—the fatigue market. The market began informally. Someone who had got, say, twelve hours of sleep the night before would trade a few of his hours for a jackrabbit stew and some homemade liquor.

As the market developed, traveling "rest merchants" began to buy sleep in towns with an excess supply and sell it in towns with a shortage. An efficient rest merchant could put together enough sleep from different people to package an entire night's shut-eye. He would then sell it to a cowboy who had been up all night directing a stampede. For a while everyone was happy. Someone with nothing better to do could make a good income just by sleeping late on Sunday mornings. Before long, however, unscrupulous businessmen began to smuggle in poor-quality sleep from foreign countries and even to steal sleep from drunks who had passed out. Cowboys who bought sleep from rest merchants started to

complain of frequent headaches. When federal agents realized that some of this contaminated sleep was crossing state lines, they stepped in and shut down the market forever.

AT THE TURN OF the century the oil boom brought fatigue to Texas in epidemic proportions. After fourteen hours on a drilling rig many oilfield roughnecks suffered from insomnia. The price of a sleeping pill jumped to ten dollars, and a glass of water to wash it down cost three dollars. Some roughnecks would pool their money, break up a pill, and just get drowsy together. Others got religion. Denominations with



strike ladles and spoons against stewpots in order to do their part.

These mutual antagonisms sometimes erupted in violence that was later regretted by both sides. In one particularly sordid incident a group of settlers gave neighboring Indians several jars of peach preserves laced with a virus that caused sleeping sickness. The Indians retaliated by burning the bedrooms of several settlers' log cabins.

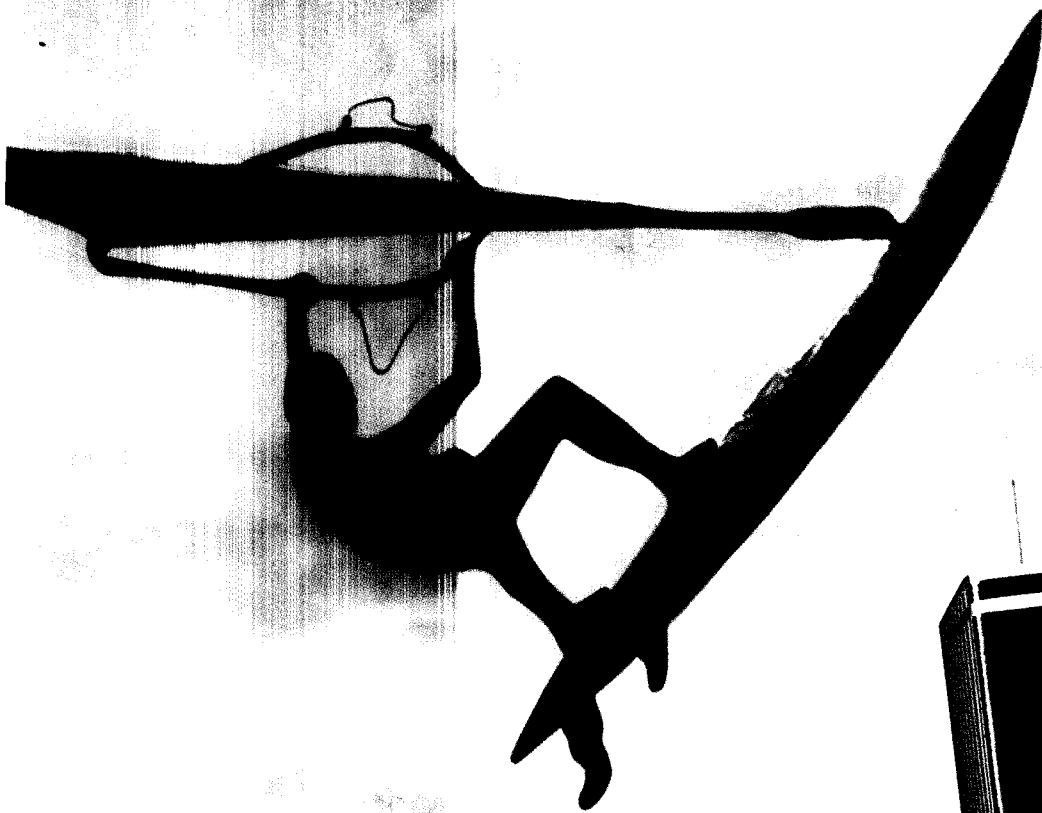
After Texas became an independent nation, a Treaty of Silence was signed with the Indians. According to this compact, everyone agreed to stop making loud noises and go home and go to bed.

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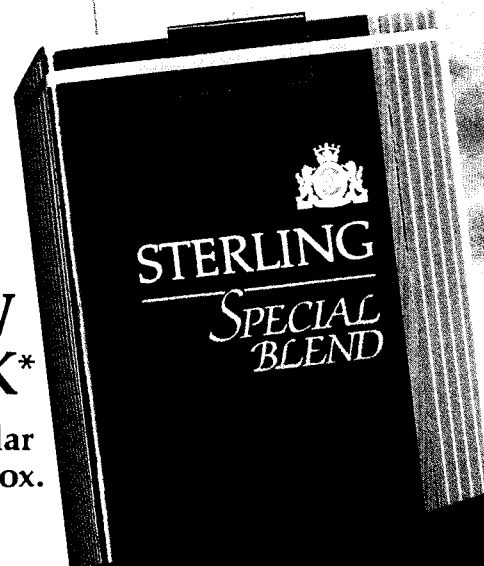
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long sermons on biblical minutiae were popular among roughnecks who otherwise would have had to count sheep.

These measures did not work for everyone, though, and not a few roughnecks took to drinking all night and shooting each other with horse pistols. In response one town council secretly legalized the eighty-minute hour and hired Pinkerton detectives to break into homes and adjust watches and clocks to comply with the law. The idea was that if roughnecks worked fourteen eighty-minute hours, they would have to go right back to work as soon as they got off, and couldn't cause any mischief. The ruse was discovered the next morning, however, when the sun came up at 3:00 A.M.

The roughnecks retaliated by hiring the same Pinkerton men to adjust the town's clocks to a forty-minute hour and a twenty-three-hour day. The Greenwich International Dateline and Hour Commission soon learned of the misdeeds, as it always does, and the guilty roughnecks were arrested.

While insomnia and insufficient sleep-time were plaguing oilfield workers and cowboys, Texas farmers were suffering from too much sleep. After their first views of west Texas's un-

relievedly flat terrain newly arrived farmers would sometimes go to sleep for days, only to wake up and, seeing the same thing all over again, go right back to sleep. Realizing that cotton would never be king at this rate, the governor authorized emergency shipments of hot coffee in tank cars. Soft-drink manufacturers were ordered to include stimulants in their formulas. These efforts proved fruitless.

Soon, however, oil and cattle were discovered in west Texas, and roughnecks and cowboys moved in to drink and fight all night. Farmers woke up with a start, and the cotton crop was saved. The roughnecks were all given official pardons for their earlier shenanigans with the clocks.

An outbreak of bedding-related violence occurred in 1914 with the onset of the so-called Bandit Wars. Overtired Mexican revolutionaries often invaded Texas on foraging expeditions and were not shy about taking mattresses by force. To get a decent night's rest, many south Texas ranchers had to take their

bedding to urban centers and sleep in town. Others placed mattresses on buckboards and hired teamsters to drive them around all night. This discouraged bandits from creeping up and yanking mattresses out from under unwary sleepers and then running away, but the expense was prohibitive for all except the well-to-do. In spite of these safeguards the bandit-revolutionaries were able to steal many mattresses and destroy even more. On some nights the border skies were black with the smoke of burning bedding. Many Texans were forced to sleep in hammocks. Finally U.S. National Guardsmen were called up and stationed along the border, and the ranchers went back to bed.

Today subtler influences have replaced armed conflict and bedding sabotage as major causes of exhaustion in Texas. The increasing complexity of city life has resulted in much confusion that leads to fatigue. Faced with a myriad of urban pressures, many Texans

now get so mixed up that they forget to go to bed until eight or nine in the morning. Soon they lose their jobs and live in the streets as "fatigue derelicts," begging for "your old pajamas" or panhandling money for pillow rental. Others turn to crime. All too often an



urban Texan will come out in the morning to his car, only to discover that it has been broken into and slept in.

The future of Texan fatigue is uncertain, but some researchers believe that much of the damage will be self-inflicted. It has long been known, even among the ancient Indian tribes of Texas, that fatigue is an altered state of consciousness. Through the improper use of history books Texas teenagers have found out about this. As a result some young people are wearing themselves out just to "get a buzz" and because it is "something different." Police officers are even beginning to see young children who refuse to go to bed or, worse, secretly stay awake under the covers, until they "get wasted." Because of this abuse of history a new state law forbids any mention of fatigue in print. The discussion you are reading is the last reference to fatigue that will ever be allowed in the state. Although it is sad that no one will ever again learn about the fatigue problems of the early settlers and Indians, it is a small price to pay to stop all this. □

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*The story of a young couple on a tight budget, an architect determined to excel,
and four carpenters devoted more to craftsmanship than to profit*

HOUSE

BY TRACY KIDDER

JIM LOCKE SETS GENTLY ON THE UNDISTURBED EARTH a mahogany box, opens it, and takes out his transit, which looks like a spyglass. It is a tool for imposing levelness on an irregular world.

Locke's transit is made of steel with small brass adjusting wheels and is as old as the century, more than twice as old as Locke, who is thirty-six. He uses it near the beginnings of jobs and first of all for guiding bulldozers. Locke erects the transit on a tripod. He turns the brass wheels until the bubble, encased in glass beneath the eyepiece, floats to the center of its chamber.

This piece of ground was once part of a New England hayfield. It lies on the southern outskirts of Amherst, Massachusetts, a college and university town, the kind of place

that has a fine public-school system and a foreign policy. The site has been studied all winter. It commands pretty views. There's a deep-looking woods on one edge. On another there's a pasture, which turns into the precipitous, forested, publicly owned hills known as the Holyoke Range. And to the north and east there's a panorama. Look north and you see a hillside orchard topped with two giant maples locally known as Castor and Pollux. Look a little east and your view extends out over a broad valley, all the way to the Pelham Hills, which have turned blue at this morning hour.

The air has some winter in it. On this morning in mid-April, 1983, a New England spring snow is predicted. The sky looks prepared. It has a whitening look. Several weeks



must pass before dandelions appear, but the urge to build has turned April into May. While Locke prepares for the transformation of this ground, four others pace around, killing time. They have their collars turned up and their hands thrust deep into coat pockets. They wait with reddening noses. None of the onlookers needs to be here, but none would have willingly stayed away. Among them is a very tall man named Bill Rawn. He is the architect. He has driven all the way from Boston to witness the birth of the first house he has ever designed, and he grins while he waits. There are Judith and Jonathan Souweine, the woman and the man of the house-to-be. (Their surname is French and is pronounced "Suh-wayne" or, if one is in a hurry, "Swayne.") They have spent months planning for this moment, and they have imagined it for many more. Judith and Jonathan smile at each other. Judith takes a few snapshots while Jim Locke works with the transit.

Turning her camera on Locke, Judith sees a refined-looking young man. "Obviously, his upbringing was very upper middle class," she says that she thought when she first met him. "Everything about him was—well, you know. He's made a conscious decision not to be a white-collar professional." Locke is wearing jeans and work boots and an old brown jacket, a workingman's uniform. His clothes are clean and he is clean-shaven. He has straight brown hair, neatly trimmed and combed, and a long, narrow jaw. There is a delicacy in his features. You can imagine his mother in him. He has a thoughtful air. He studies his transit a moment, laying two fingers on his lips. Then, as he bends again to the eyepiece, he wipes his hair off his forehead and for a moment he looks boyish and defiant. The ceremony can begin as soon as the bulldozer arrives.

When Locke has begun to wonder whether it is coming at all, it appears—a small, yellow machine on a large trailer. Locke gives the driver instructions, while the others hang back. The bulldozer puffs smoke and clanks down off the trailer. The first pass the machine makes over the ground, ripping the hair off the earth, looks like an act of great violence. The bulldozer does resemble a beast, but the creature is both unruly and extremely methodical. Gradually the sense of disruption goes out of the scene. The machine goes back over the same, suddenly dark ground. Piles of earth mount up. The hole deepens and, as sand appears, turns orange. Watching the bulldozer work is restful and mesmerizing. Its noise discourages speech, leaving each member of the party alone and thoughtful.

This group does have a few worries. They have not settled all the details of the plan. They have not arrived at a final price for the house. They have not yet signed a contract. Jim Locke wanted all of that done before this day. He felt that he had to go ahead, knowing that if he delayed he might not get the excavator for weeks. But Locke can imagine events that would leave him holding the bill for this work. He and the Souweines have begun to build on faith, without much knowledge of each other.

The party lingers a while. The bulldozer's cab begins to sink beneath the level of the field.

FOR EIGHT YEARS JUDITH AND JONATHAN SHARED with another young couple a duplex in Pelham, a town that adjoins Amherst. But both families grew too large for the place, and reluctantly they all agreed that the time for moving on had come. Judith's parents, Florence and Jules Wiener, had settled in a new house on about twenty sloping acres. Jonathan and Judith looked around. They decided that they'd like to buy a piece of her parents' property. They liked the idea of locating three generations of their family on adjoining land. It was a traditional arrangement that had grown uncommon. They imagined many advantages. They also thought that it was a slightly risky undertaking, but they like to see themselves as people who are not afraid of taking chances. Jonathan is hardly a typical son-in-law. He adores Judith's mother, and he and her father have been friends ever since Jonathan was seventeen and came courting Judith. Both Jonathan and Jules are lawyers, and it's a family joke that if Jonathan and Judith ever sued each other for divorce, Jules would opt to represent his son-in-law.

So Judith and Jonathan made their offer to her parents, who concealed momentarily their great delight, lest they seem too eager and stir up second thoughts. Jules and Florence decided to Jonathan and Judith about four acres of land. The Souweines would have a house built on it by the time the youngest of their three children entered kindergarten.

JONATHAN IS POLITE AND very direct. In conversation he tends to curtness, but let him get on a subject that truly engages him, such as a coming election, and he becomes positively garrulous, tapping his listener's arm for emphasis, talking so swiftly that his words slur. He looks his best at such moments, or running a meeting, or speaking in front of a political gathering, or striding down a street. He clearly likes command. He is an inch below six feet. He has broad shoulders. He comes at you a little sleepy-eyed, wearing a small, crooked grin, and carrying his arms out from his body in a way that makes you think of impending showdowns in westerns.

Jonathan started college on a basketball scholarship, and even now, in a business suit, his hair in middle-aged retreat, he looks like a busy play-making guard—what sportswriters call the spark-plug type. He was a good athlete and a better student. He gave up his scholarship, went to Columbia, participated in protests against the Vietnam War, campaigned for a liberal, anti-war congressman, and went on to Harvard Law School. He imagined himself becoming a lawyer who would work for the public good. He spent a year clerking for a federal judge and another in the department of consumer protection of the Massachusetts attorney general's office; in between he took command of the Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group and in that capacity led a number of lobbying campaigns, for solar energy and for a bottle bill and against white-collar crime. Then Jonathan ran for district attorney of Hampshire and Franklin counties. It was now or probably never, he told

Judith. Against all predictions—he was a newcomer, outspoken, and even a little left-wing—Jonathan won the Democratic primary. He lost the general election, and soon afterward he became a country lawyer. For the sake of his family he gave up running for office, but he has kept his hand in as an epistolary politician. He writes letters to editors assessing political candidates. He writes about burning issues of the day and also about local fund-raising events. He has written so many letters, and so many have been published locally, that a Jonathan Souweine letter to the editor has become a virtual institution in Amherst and the towns nearby. Some people think he is still running for office, but clearly he is writing letters instead.

A former lieutenant in Jonathan's campaign remembers a quiet day in their office when a stranger, a middle-aged man, walked in off the street and asked what sort of name was Souweine.

"French," Jonathan said.

The man looked greatly relieved. "Thank God. I thought you were Jewish."

"I am," Jonathan said pleasantly.

"He looked right at the guy," his former lieutenant remembers. "Jonathan told him he hoped that religion wouldn't be an issue in the election. He talked to the guy for about ten minutes, and I remember thinking as I watched, 'This is Jonathan in one of his best moments.'"

Jonathan has fun. He does not deny himself the pleasure of a gaudy necktie now and then. He has a way with children. He emerges from a movie about Robin Hood—his favorite hero—teaching his boys how to swashbuckle down the street. He says, "I love trials. I love the intensity, the action." Losing the race for DA, he insists, was a fine, enlightening experience, nearly as rewarding as winning, he guesses. Jonathan seems to believe in coming home with his shield—or else on it.

Judith likes to mix it up now and then too. She is small, with black curly hair. She hopes to become a representative to the Amherst Town Meeting, a yearly congress on town affairs that usually lasts for days. It's some people's idea of torture and her idea of fun. She runs Amherst's pre-school program for children with special needs. Of the fights between her teachers' union and the local school board, battles in which she will participate during the building of her house, she says, "There's one guy on our team who's not confrontational. But me? My idea is you yell, you scream, you pack the room and have emotional floor fights. What could be better? So we lose. At least we'll go down kicking and screaming." She explains, "If you grow up with a lot of yelling and screaming, yelling and screaming doesn't scare you. In fact, you kind of like it."

She's the bosomy, softhearted, affectionate, challenging mother, who minds everyone's business and who says, when Jonathan scolds her for offering unsolicited advice to friends, "They want my advice. They just don't know it." She is also a woman in a suit. She has a master's and a doctorate in education and has done a great deal of postdoctoral work, particularly in the study of disabilities that cut

children off from learning. She has worked as a guidance counselor and a special-education teacher. She developed the pre-school program that she now runs. She has written books and papers and delivered many lectures, and has served as a consultant to a number of schools besides Amherst's—they asked for her advice. She has contributed to her field. She is "Judith" or "Judith Souweine," and she sometimes corrects people who forget or don't know and call her Judy or Mrs. Souweine. She also laughs a great deal and often at herself. Her smile has light. It tempers the occasional sharpness of her tongue. She's self-assured, sarcastic, and merry as birdsong in the morning. Most strangers find it hard not to warm to her. She cries easily. Her nose turns red beforehand. Talking to Jonathan, she calls him Souweine, or Pook, or sometimes Pookeroo.

Of the friendships they share, Judith says, "In most cases I'm closer to the friend than Jonathan, because Jonathan doesn't talk to people. He just talks to me."

"Judith's a very good friend," Jonathan says. "She likes to chat. I don't. If you've got a good marriage and you like your kids, you just don't have much time to make new friendships. I find I get a lot more back from my wife and kids than from any friendship."

"In our family," Judith says, "I take care of the big emotional decisions."

"I like the ceremonial occasions," Jonathan says. "You can feel emotion, but not too much emotion."

She attends to their social life and to matters of aesthetics. Jonathan, she says, has little aesthetic sense, and he agrees. He is their organizational genius, however. His principal tool is the list. If he has a great deal to do tomorrow, as he almost always does, he cannot sleep until he records his obligations in a list. He pulls lists out of pockets, drawers, his briefcase.

Judith and Jonathan call themselves "B-plus people," a condition they define this way: "Life's not perfect. Get it done." They keep appointments and don't like to be kept waiting themselves. They revel in being busy and worry sometimes that they carry busyness too far. They astonished their housemates in the duplex at first, Jonathan remembers. "Come Friday, they'd be tired out and want to regroup and sit around and read, and there we'd be with every piece of sports equipment you could have and thirty-two community meetings to go to."

They have a fine, sturdy marriage that is more than a marriage. It is an enterprise. They make a formidable combination. They are decisive. They know their own minds. And they knew what they wanted in a house. They wanted a study so that Jonathan could work at home more often than he did. They wanted a remote master bedroom and a special domain for children. To ease traffic jams during the morning rush to schools and office they wanted a bigger kitchen and more than the one bathroom they had in the duplex. "And a place where we can all sit down and play a game," Judith said. "And a place for the kids' markers." They had given huge parties in the duplex, but a larger house would make a better site for parties. "It's

nice to have a house where you can do weddings and bar mitzvahs," Judith said. "When I was growing up, there was an unwritten rule that you did those things at home." The location of their imagined house would improve their opportunities for hiking and bike riding and cross-country skiing. Because their yard would not be enclosed in woods, as their present one was, they would be able to do a lot of gardening. When Judith and Jonathan thought of a new house, they thought mainly of their family's busy social, civic, working, sporting, life, and maybe even of packing a few more activities into it. "When you get more space, you can do more stuff," Judith said, smiling.

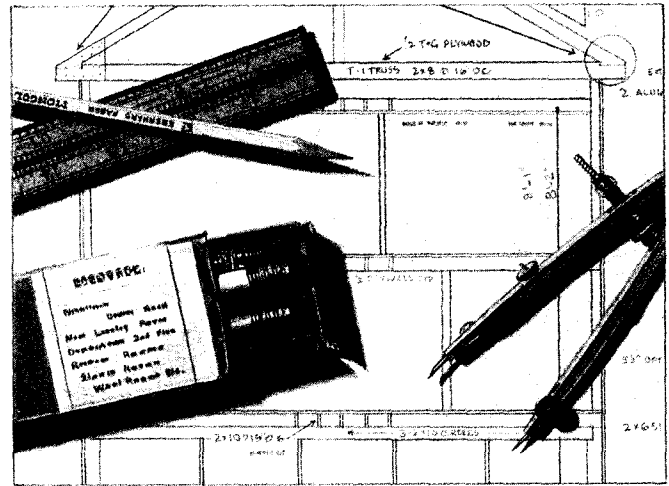
Judith and Jonathan had imagined in some detail a house that would suit them functionally. Jonathan had already begun making lists. But they were stuck on the question, among others, of what style of house theirs should be. How should it look to their new neighbors, to their friends, and to people passing by on the old road to Boston, down at the bottom of the hill?

Judith and Jonathan had not rearranged their political philosophy to suit fashion or their growing affluence, and they did not want to display their bank account in the façade of their new house. "I won't be a brilliant lawyer," Jonathan once remarked. "I work hard and I'm a good lawyer, and that's good enough for almost any situation, and it's good enough for me." A plain-styled, sturdy house would have suited him best. Judith's first impulse was utilitarian: "It's the structural details that can change the quality of your life." They had made up their minds, though, to build a house of 3,000 square feet, in a region where custom-made houses cost at least \$50 per foot. "By any standard," Jonathan would say later, "it's a lot of house and a lot of money." Neither he nor Judith wanted to spend what looked to them like an enormous sum and end up with what Judith called "just a big box." (The enormous differences in the cost of living from one part of America to another are almost entirely accounted for by differences in the cost of housing. What is merely a studio apartment in Boston is an expensive house in Amherst.)

Judith grew up in a large and stylish house on Long Island. It had a foyer and a graceful staircase and a full butler's pantry. Judith did not imagine a reproduction of that house. It would have cost too much, and anyway, she did not want to imprison herself in the past. But she had been happy in that lovely house, and she did think back to it sometimes when she thought ahead to her new one. So did Jonathan. "I grew up in a Long Island subdivision, in a split-level house. All the houses were the same. I didn't mind. I didn't think about it. Then I met Judith, and Judith lived in this beautiful Colonial house. It was just gorgeous. It made me aware that there was something other than split-levels. It made me aware."

Although she and Jonathan considered many options, they began to feel that they didn't have all the skills to invent their new house by themselves. And time was running out. Finally, late in January, 1983, they decided to

call in an architect. "We felt the problems of building a house were too complex for us and we're great believers in professionalism," Judith said afterward. "It looked like a difficult piece of land. We wanted to get someone with a lot of aesthetic ideas, too. Aesthetics are not as important to us as the function. They're important, but they're not where we start."



THE TOP OF A STANDARD DOORFRAME IS SIX FEET eight inches from the floor. Bill Rawn's head just misses tops of doorways, like a trailer truck going under highway bridges. Bill is just short enough to live in a standardized world. He is slender. He has thick, dark, shiny hair, hair of good health, and a handsome face. In his office, in Boston, Bill usually wears dress shirts and penny loafers and casual pants—jeans or corduroys. The pants are usually too short. They leave a lot of ankle exposed. When the time nears for Bill to leave his office, to meet a prospective client or go to lunch, he ducks into his closet. He reappears soon afterward, knotting a tie, dressed in a gray flannel suit, tailored, transformed. He worries that his metamorphosis in the closet may seem "a little false," but there's nothing unnatural-looking about Bill in a suit. He has become a man of affairs. On the street he catches people's eyes. Passing him, you might wonder if you had seen him in the paper or on TV last night.

Bill speaks fluently on other subjects, but it can be nerve-racking to hear him talk about designs of houses and buildings. When he begins a sentence, you worry that he may not find his way to the end of it. He has a very deep voice, prone to cracking in moments of excitement. Words fail him. He stammers. "Bill's appealing awkwardness," one female acquaintance calls it. When Bill begins to draw, however, he is all authority and purpose. His long fingers move with assurance and grace. Bill's right hand is clearly his proper grammar book and dictionary.

Bill's résumé is six and a half well-stocked pages long. Its high points suggest the history of a Renaissance man in delirium. It takes him from Yale and a degree in political

science to Harvard Law School, to two years in a large law firm, to the post of assistant chancellor at the University of Massachusetts. In the meantime, he established himself as a successful artist, whose work was displayed in SoHo, uptown New York, and Amsterdam. Finally, in the late 1970s, he threw over all of his other careers for the one he had always dreamed of pursuing and went to architectural school at MIT, where he won the design prize for his graduating class. He went on to work, under titles of ascending importance, for Davis, Brody & Associates, a large architectural firm in New York. Around the time when the Souweines were imagining a new house, Bill decided to start his own firm, in Boston.

Bill and the Souweines had met years before, during a political campaign, and for many years since they had spent a summer week together on Cape Cod. Bill spent hours alone on the beach, didn't insist that the others join him, always washed the dishes, didn't care if he got a bed, and actually seemed to prefer a mattress on the floor. When the Souweines decided to consult an architect, they thought of Bill. Perhaps they could help him get started in his practice. Besides, Bill was brilliant. If they were B-plus people, Bill was A-plus—a perfectionist.

When Bill got the phone call in January, inviting him to Amherst—to explore the possibilities, no commitments either way—he felt grateful. He felt flattered. Even though he was essentially a rookie, they trusted him as a friend. The mainstays of his life, friends and architecture, were coming together in his first commission, his first command.

Bill had the feeling he had used up all the time allotted him for trying out new careers. “You start at age forty. . . I come from a social world that expects success, whatever that means. It's fine to fiddle around for a while. Your friends are amused, and then you throw all that up to become an architect. You don't do that very many times.” In talking about the Souweines' house, Bill said, “Single-family houses are mainly not architected. But they have been a means for architects to acquire reputations.”

“A HOUSE WANTS a place,” Bill Rawns likes to say. When he arrived for his first site visit and consultation, he was pleased to find that his friends' land had meadow on one side and woods on another. They had bought an edge of a woods, and the edge of a woods is a definite place in a way that an open field or the middle of a woods is not.

Jonathan spoke about the front door. The one to the Souweines' side of the duplex stood out of the way and invited little use. Jonathan said he wanted an unmistakable front door. If they were going to pay for a front door, he wanted people to use it. Bill had a compatible desire. He believed that a house should “respond” to the nearest public thoroughfare. It should not turn its back on public and community, and certainly not if it was the house of Jonathan and Judith Souweine. Bill thought he would also like to keep the new house's windows from opening directly onto Judith's parents' dormered Cape, to the east, or onto

the split-levels down the hill across the road, to the north. The road, he noticed, ran past the Souweines' land in a line almost exactly east to west. How to honor the road and the bucolic while avoiding mundane views of other houses?

As Judith and Jonathan talked, Bill sketched a rectangle. One long side of the house that Bill was now building faced roughly south. One of the narrow ends faced west, into trees. The other narrow end looked out on the big, open view. On the long south side he installed a lot of windows. Into the narrow east side he put a front door. He turned the house a little off the east-west axis—15 degrees, eventually—so that the front door, although not directly facing the road, would open up in view of it. No one driving up from the road would miss that front door.

The Souweines described their wish to set aside a domain for their children, one large and nice enough to keep them there a while. Bill drew an upstairs to the house and assigned the whole thing to the children—three bedrooms, two playrooms. The Souweines wanted to recapture some of the privacy they had enjoyed before they'd had children. To the back of the large rectangle Bill appended a smaller, narrower one, a one-story extension with bedroom and bath, nestled into the woods. The windows of this master bedroom would look out upon the line of the woods, down upon a brook, away from Judith's parents' house, a little bit away from it all.

Judith and Jonathan wanted a big living room. It should serve for formal dining now and then and for parties. It should contain their baby grand piano. It should also invite informal family gatherings. That old home of Judith's childhood had a grand living room and also a *de facto* one, a den with an unaccountable coziness about it, where the family always congregated, leaving the living room for company. The Souweines could not afford two living rooms, so this one room had to be versatile. Bill drew a living room running the width of the house—a well-lighted room with windows on both north and south walls and many fine views through them. He made the room rectangular, because in his experience squares diminish the possibilities for coziness. He installed a chimney at the center of the house, behind the living room's east wall, and sketched a hearth for the Souweines to gather around. Judith and Jonathan told him they wanted a spacious, sunny kitchen and an ample breakfast nook beside it—the house would have no dining room. Bill gave over the southeastern half of the main floor to those rooms. Jonathan said he had to have a study. He would like a pantry, but he would trade it for a study. Bill fit the study into the northeastern side of the plan, next to the foyer. There the little study's window would command both the grand view and the sunrise. Bill rarely feels awake before noon, but Jonathan rises early and Bill wanted him to have the morning sun.

At a single sitting, out of the void of virtually unlimited possibilities, Bill had summoned a floor plan that fulfilled Judith's and Jonathan's most important wishes for a house. Bill felt warmed up himself. This basic form could answer

his wishes too. This layout—the rectangular box with a front door in the gable end, more or less facing the road—had a historic precedent. Elaborated in his mind, its roof, its paint, its moldings on, it was a kind of American house that he had long admired casually.

“What this house wants to be is Greek Revival,” Bill said.

“It does?” Judith said. “How does it know?”

ANYONE IN THE BUILDING trades knows unpleasant stories about architects. The architect sacrifices the client’s dreams and comfort for the sake of his own art in so many tales that you have to suspect arrogance is a hazard of the trade. But if you watched Bill help the Souweines make decisions for themselves, you’d know that he is not a martinet. He has a reservoir of what the Romantic poets called sympathetic imagination. But when he believes that he is right, Bill does not give in easily. “He’s real mild, and *real* obstinate,” Jim Locke says of him.

When dealing with professionals, many people vacillate between servility and resentment. Jonathan and Judith believe in choosing their experts carefully, conveying their wishes clearly, and then surrendering some of their authority. The Souweines worried that a house whose style derived from Greek Revival might look ostentatious. They had thought they wanted something along the lines of a New England farmhouse. With courtliness and persistence Bill allayed many of their fears. Jonathan and Judith questioned him closely and decided to let him have his way.

Bill belongs to the contextualist branch of the post-modern movement in architecture. The contextualist believes not in form for form’s sake, as many modernist architects did, but in appropriate form. To Bill, contextualism means designs that partake of a community’s character and history. The nineteenth-century passion for Greek architecture left its mark on Amherst. Bill wanted to capture the spirit of Amherst’s old Greek Revival buildings in a new design. Studying those old buildings, he defined for himself the salient visual features of the form; his synthesis was stately but simple, at least when compared with many real Greek Revival buildings. Bill applied this synthesis to three sides of the Souweine house’s exterior. He imagined the long, south-facing wall differently.

Bill envisioned a south wall that would mark the house as a work of post-modern architecture. He wanted to create a wall that would emphasize its openings and celebrate southern light, and that would also give inhabitants the feeling of being enclosed. Standing behind walls made of broad sheets of glass had always made Bill feel that he was at the unfenced edge of a precipice. So he filled the southern wall not with huge expanses of glass but with many traditional, mullioned windows. This was his way of supplying interrupted surfaces that would make people sitting near those windows feel unconsciously at ease.

Arranging all the windows into a pleasing composition was a difficult puzzle. Bill worked on it assiduously, alone in the office that he had rented in Boston, racing against a

deadline to complete what he considered the most important part of the exterior. He finished on time. The experience left him uncharacteristically short-tempered, but not for long. Although a great deal of drawing lay ahead of him, he had done the hardest part. And he was excited. He was about to see something wonderful happen. He was about to see his first commissioned design turn into a house. He was about to see paper get turned into wood.

COMPARED WITH TOWNS DOWN NEAR THE CONNECTICUT River, settlements in the hills just a dozen miles or so to the west and north of Amherst seem like outposts. On March 1, a month and a half before the groundbreaking, as a dank mist fell on Amherst, it rained ice up in the hills. That night, in a little community called Apple Valley, limbs were snapping, a sound just like gunfire, and the power was out. Inside a house on a hillside Jim Locke and two of his partners sat at a kitchen table. They were members of a small building company of equal partners, called Apple Corps. The fourth member, Alex Ghiselin, was out of town. At the table were Jim, a broad-shouldered fellow in wire-rimmed glasses named Ned Krutsky, and Richard Gougeon, a bearded man, who owned the house where they had gathered. In the eerie light of a Coleman lantern the forearms of the three carpenters looked enormous, like clubs.

“This is the best-looking house I’ve seen in a long time,” Jim said.

Jim and his partners had before them invitations to bid on three new houses. The Souweine job was the biggest. They could all see from a glance at the plans that the framing would be tricky and the trim challenging. “It’s neat,” Jim said. In the drawings on the table, in the flickering light, the three partners could foresee a full and interesting summer of building from scratch. They were eager for the smell of clean, new wood.

Even more than Richard and Ned, Jim wanted to build the Souweine house. In their ten years together Apple Corps had followed a policy that is unusual among builders. The partner who ran a given job—usually the one a customer called first—got paid less per hour for planning the work and dealing with money than he and the others received for driving nails and sawing wood. The arrangement was a statement about the group’s early social philosophy. It had the practical effect of keeping any one partner from becoming too fond of bossing the others around. Jim had once favored the practice. Now he thought they should abandon it. Jonathan had called Jim. If the Souweines accepted Apple Corps’s bid, Jim would run the job. He wanted to run it. For many years Jim had viewed as a chore the part of building that is business. He was ready to let himself get interested in business now.

AT A LUMBERYARD ONCE, needing to measure the width of a board and having no ruler, Jim spread his right hand on the surface of the wood and declared, “It’s twelve inches.”

He had long ago measured the breadth of his opened hands, to enhance their utility. Only on a very large man would Jim's hands look normal. Just one of them opened can cover his long face, from ear to ear and forehead to chin. He could keep one hand behind his back and still play peekaboo with a baby. Although a knuckle is likely to carry a wound now and then, Jim keeps his hands very clean and the nails neatly trimmed. His hands look serene, in the manner of graceful animals.

Jim was born to work with his hands, but he doesn't feel he was raised to do so. Both of his parents excelled in college. Both were Phi Beta Kappas. His father is an eminent lawyer. "Education was pushed at me as a way of being successful," Jim says. He went to a public high school and for a year to a prep school. He went to two different colleges in the 1960s. Some were good schools, some poor, he thinks. Wherever he went, he did badly. "I couldn't really flunk out of college," he explains, "because there weren't really any grades at the ones I went to."

He drifted away from them without a diploma. "It's funny," he says, "because I love learning things and I got some real highs in there, and even now I get purely intellectual joy out of things." Jim speaks softly and always grammatically. He often analyzes his own thoughts and sometimes analyzes his analysis. He seems to have drawn a distinction between education and schools, the sort that some God-fearing people draw between religion and its churches. Jim reads a great deal. Before he would pick up his toolbox in the mornings that spring and summer, he would read, among other things, the books *Understanding Wood*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Pride and Prejudice* and issues of the magazine *Fine Woodworking*.

Jim had a passion for automobiles as a boy. Drifting around between colleges and afterward, he earned his way as a mechanic. He got married. He was raised near Boston but born in the Connecticut River Valley. In 1972 Jim came back to his birthplace. He bought acreage in the hill town of Ashfield, in an area of dirt roads and orchards. That summer he set up a tent on his land and built a house. He had no experience working in wood. He and his wife labored alone, one long summer, just they and a book, Rex Roberts's *Your Engineered House*.

In 1973, after serving that isolated apprenticeship, Jim turned pro. He went to work for a building contractor and learned the trade mostly by watching other carpenters.

Jim and another young settler in Apple Valley worked for the same contractor that year. Their boss's business looked doomed. Jim and the other young man took a job on their own, helping Alex Ghiselin renovate a house. Alex joined them in business. They persuaded a local architect to let them bid on a new house. Then Richard Gougeon came onto the team.

Richard had a different sort of pedigree from Jim's. "Jim and I," Richard says, "we come from completely different ends of the rope." But Richard, more than the other members of the partnership, has been Jim's alter ego, his improbable secret sharer.

Jim lacked interest in school. Richard was dyslexic. Richard worked hard at his books, but he could not read well enough to keep up. He flunked every grade through the tenth but was always passed on to the next. He finally got a chance to acquire some self-esteem when he was sent to a trade school. In twelfth grade there his classmates named him carpenter of the year. Jim had moved to the hills west of the Connecticut River. Richard was raised there. During most of his childhood he lived in a house trailer. His father's family came from Canada in the late 1800s. His father worked as a farmer, as a lumberjack, and as a repairer of equipment—trucks, tractors, balers.

Richard is short, with a physique that would serve for socialist posters. His beard is full and black. He has a booming voice and usually keeps the volume turned up. His repertoire of laughter ranges from silent mugging, eyes wide and mouth shut as if on something inedible, to bellowing, head back on his shoulders—it could bring down rain.

Like Jim, Richard built a house for his family in Apple Valley. He did so in his spare time, on nights and weekends, and mostly by himself. By the spring of 1974 he had reached the roof. On a Sunday morning his father came over to lend a hand. They were putting up the rafters when a car pulled in. A moment later there appeared over the top of the ladder a lithe stranger with a nailbag and hammer hung from his waist. That was how Richard first met Jim, when Jim came unasked to help with the roof.

In the years that followed, the partnership survived many squabbles. When they named themselves Apple Corps, after Apple Valley, some hill-town tradesmen smiled. This group sounded like another bunch of hippie carpenters. In fact, though all had built or renovated their own houses and Richard had practiced carpentry since tenth grade, none knew much about the business of contracting.

Apple Corps grew up together, as Richard says. Their skills evolved. Their business practices lagged behind. Contractors get wealthy in part by subcontracting out large pieces of a job, hiring unskilled labor for some aspects of it and semiskilled labor for others, and bringing in the crack carpenters at the end, for the things that show in a house. Even the best contractors cut corners, for the sake of reduced labor costs. Apple Corps always hired subcontractors for the plumbing and wiring, often for the heating and masonry, and sometimes for the painting, but they did the rest of the work themselves. Their reluctance to hire helpers meant that their overhead was low and they could underbid many other contractors. It also meant that they could build only one large or two small houses in a summer, which reduced their opportunities for profit. Although the practice made Richard shake his head (to him, it was a form of not minding your own business), they had turned down jobs once in a while, because they did not care to execute certain sorts of designs with certain kinds of materials. "I've never put on aluminum siding yet," Jim remarks, with evident satisfaction. They did no advertising to speak of, and you could not even find the company's

name in the phone book. In the last good year of forty-hour weeks each of the partners had earned about \$20,000 in salary and profit, enough to live comfortably, but hardly enough to get rich. They had often talked about making more money, but collectively they had felt reluctant to change their ways.

In their ten years Apple Corps had laid hands on more than two hundred houses. They had left their mark on the countryside. They had gotten steady work solely through the recommendations of former customers and the good notices of tradesmen. Jim always hated the company name, but he felt proud of Apple Corps's accomplishments.

WITH NED'S AND RICHARD'S help, Jim came up with an estimate. The Souweines accepted his bid. But Bill had been given scarcely a month to invent a new house, and the plans Jim bid on, though nice-looking, were sketchy. The imagined house began to change. Jim, Bill, and the Souweines held many long meetings. During these, Judith made a study of Jim.

"Jim's of, you know, the same genre we are. But he's gone a different way. He made a conscious decision not to do what Jonathan's done. So all that makes it a little more complicated than if we'd hired another builder." Jim's apparent concern for the quality of her new house amazed Judith. She liked that side of Jim, but other traits she found slightly exasperating. Jim seemed reluctant to bargain, unwilling to enter the fray of commerce: "It's sort of naive, sort of purist Yankee." In fact rural Yankees once made a name for themselves as clever horse traders, but at some point, in the western hills at least, Yankee tradesmen gave up bargaining for the take-it-or-leave-it approach.

Judith considered the possibility that the slight discomfort she felt with Jim might stem from "an ethnic difference." She had known anti-Semitism, though, and she had not felt that from Jim. It would be odd if she had, because Jim's father is Jewish. Jim had no reason to mention that fact to Judith. Jim's friends describe his looks, accurately enough, as "Waspy." But Judith guessed right anyway. "It doesn't have to do with being Jewish or non-Jewish," she concluded. "It's a cultural-political difference."

ON A MONDAY IN late April, Jim walks into Jonathan's office in Northampton carrying a zippered leather case wedged tightly under his arm. Any purse snatcher would know that something inside was worth caring about. The case contains Jim's final price for the house and, on many sheets of yellow legal paper, the history of that price. It started at \$162,000. The Souweines subtracted the garage and half a dozen other expensive items. The price fell to about \$139,000. It started back up again as the Souweines and Bill made new substitutions and additions. Jim's case contains the estimated cost of materials from Apple Corps's usual supplier; firm estimates on foundation work, plumbing, heating, wiring, painting, and insulating from Apple Corps's usual subcontractors; and Apple Corps's estimate

of its members' own labor. Jim has put all those figures together and has added ten percent to the total, to cover overhead and profit and fear of miscalculation. He has come up with a hill-town Yankee's price. It is an exact-looking figure, rounded to the nearest ten dollars.

From his last meeting with Jonathan, Jim knows that the Souweines hope for concessions on the price, but he's not sure that, even as it stands, it is high enough to cover the cost of this house and bring in a modest profit for Apple Corps. The builders have turned down all other jobs for this one, though. In planning this house Jim has invested at least two weeks' time, for which he hasn't yet been paid. Losing this job would rank among the large setbacks in Apple Corps's history. Jim feels nervous. He says so, rather nervously, to Judith and Jonathan.

Judith sits knitting in a chair in front of Jonathan's desk. She smiles at Jim and trades some small talk.

Just to build the house they want—and never mind the purchase of the land—Judith and Jonathan must borrow, at 13 percent interest, \$100,000, the maximum that the local savings-and-loans will lend for house construction. To raise the remaining tens of thousands, whatever they come to exactly, the Souweines hope for a good and timely sale of their old house, and, of course, houses aren't always easy to sell. Jonathan hasn't lost much sleep over the money, but the sheer amount makes Judith nervous. She confesses later to an embattled feeling—"It's us against the world, you know." The world is a troupe of unknown lumber dealers and workers, with a building contractor at their head. You turn everything over to a gang of people who don't really know you or have any reason to care about you. You turn over dreams, pride, and money. It's a frightening gamble. Judith and Jonathan don't intend to undertake it without some reassurances and some measure of control.

Jonathan hopes that Jim's final price will be around \$142,000. He fears it will be more, and if it is, he'll ask Jim to lower it, if only to get proof that Jim will compromise with them. Judith is a trained psychologist, among other things. She can foresee an argument. The prospect doesn't frighten her. She smiles and knits. A button on the lapel of her blazer reads, GOOD CONTRACT GOOD EDUCATION, a token of the role she plays in negotiations elsewhere. If she feels at all nervous, it's well concealed in the thrust and parry of her needles.

They begin. "Okay, Judith, tell him," Jonathan says.

"I will really go crazy if I have to live with my father for a month. My sense was it was absolutely clear we'd be in by September first," Judith says to Jim. She smiles.

There's intimacy in this plea. Jim turns to her and leans in her direction. "What can I say? I can't build it any faster. I would like to do it sooner."

Evidently, Judith has resigned herself to October 31—after which, according to the contract, Apple Corps must pay the Souweines \$100 a day if the house isn't complete.

"Okay," Jonathan says, smiling at Jim. "How much are you going to build this house for?"

"I still don't have the prices on the window casings,"

Jim says. "My supplier let me down. He went to a banquet tonight. But in theory, with narrow casings, it's one hundred forty-six thousand six hundred and sixty. The reason I'm so nervous, I've been over and over this so many times I don't really understand the numbers anymore. My partner Richard looked at the plans today, and he said, 'It's okay, we can build it for that.' So I guess it's all right."

"What are the high points?" Judith asks. "What have we changed?" She knits. Jim extracts his yellow pad from his case and reads numbers, all the deletions they've made, all the additions.

"Does that make sense?" Jim asks.

No one speaks.

"Something bothers you?" Jim says to Jonathan.

Jonathan has been studying his own sheaf of yellow paper. He looks up abruptly, like a man awakening. "No," he says pleasantly.

Again there is silence. Again Jim breaks into it. "I have no idea how to value Bill's time," he says, referring to the architect. "I know I'd have had to do more drawings without him. I know I've been to more meetings than I ever have before, and I don't know if that's because of him. And on the other concerns you had, Jonathan, we just didn't add very much as a fudge factor in our original bid. Frankly, there are a couple of things we left out and we haven't put them back in. So I've allowed two hundred dollars for Bill's work, and that two hundred dollars is the only one of the things we talked about that I'm willing to remove."

Judith knits. Jonathan leans a contemplative elbow on his desk. Finally Judith speaks up. "You and I," she says to Jonathan, "I think we should talk about it."

Judith might just have fired a starter's gun. Jonathan jumps up. Judith arises. They vanish into another room.

Jim's price exceeds the one that Jonathan hoped for by several thousand dollars. Jonathan knows that an estimate on something as large and complex as a house can't be as precise as Jim's figure suggests. To Jonathan, Jim's price begs for some negotiation. To Jim, the price represents hours and hours of honest addition and subtraction. For his part, Jonathan believes that Jim has been honest, and though disappointed, he's prepared to find the several thousand more than he hoped he'd have to pay, if Jim in turn will round the number down to the nearest thousand. "I think he's gonna go nuts," Judith says. Jonathan stands firm. He just wants Jim to come down a little on the price, and she agrees Jim should.

They're gone only a few minutes. They reseal themselves as briskly as they left. Jim laughs out loud, at nothing in particular. "Okay," Jonathan says. "What can I say? I came here hoping the price would be somewhere between one-forty and one-forty-five." He studies his papers. He looks up, the trace of a smile on his face. "I don't want to bargain or anything. You take off six hundred and sixty dollars and we have a deal."

Jim is sitting very stiffly. He opens his hands. "Why do you want to dicker?" he says.

"You call that dickering?" Jonathan says. "I call that a

round number." It'll cost him \$4,000 for appliances, he explains: removing the \$600 and adding in the appliances will bring the grand total to \$150,000. "So when my friends ask, I can say it's a hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar house."

"Why don't you leave the six hundred and sixty in and tell them it cost a hundred and fifty thousand?" Jim says.

Silence takes over again. Someone's stomach growls. Jonathan has picked up his calculator. Jim has pulled his out. It is hard to imagine what is left to compute. Judith smiles. "Look at this. The war of the calculators."

"That's my proposal," Jonathan says, the brief skirmish over. "We make the deal, I won't bug you or complain."

"It makes me uncomfortable," Jim says. "I'm bargaining with three other guys' money." He adds quickly, "I know that's not your problem."

"I just talked to my partner," Judith says, still smiling.

Jim shifts in his chair. "It's stupid, you know. Here I am worried about six hundred dollars on a one-hundred-forty-six-thousand-dollar job." He adds, "But so are you."

"Actually, I'm worried about a lot more," Jonathan says.

Jim laughs. "I feel foolish."

"Don't feel foolish," Jonathan says. "Talk to your partners."

"I've got to," Jim says. He is no longer laughing, all of a sudden. "If it were just me, I'd say, No way."

The tone of the discussion changes now. "One thing I worry about, Jim. You're building my house, you have to make decisions. I have partners. If I want to move the office, I'll call a general meeting—but not if I'm just going to buy paper clips." Jim stares at a point on the wall. "I don't want you to feel bad or pressured," Jonathan adds.

"You got to make a deal, Jim!" Judith says, not unkindly. "You got to make a deal."

"I'm not used to bargaining," Jim says to her.

"Hey, I bargain," Jonathan says. "Judith bargains, and this—I'm kind of annoyed, because I thought I was being magnanimous."

"My job's not bargaining. You accepted the bid!" Jim says.

"Do you think they just built the Empire State Building? They didn't bargain over the price?" Jonathan says.

"It feels to me like if you don't make a little deal out of it, you won't feel good about it," Jim says.

"I want to loosen you up, Jim," Jonathan says.

"Loosen me up how?" Jim says, raising his voice. "By the purse strings?"

"I want the six hundred dollars," Jonathan says, softly.

"But you don't go up on a mountain and return with the truth. You can't tell me your estimate is the only possible number. I think there's got to be a little more give and take, a little more bending, a little more suppleness."

Jim looks at no one, and no one speaks. Then Jonathan sighs. "I really did think I was being magnanimous. I have a short office meeting. I'm available if there's anything else to talk about. I don't think there's anything else to talk about."

Jonathan leaves. Jim walks out like a person who has found himself in the wrong neighborhood, wishing but not daring to run.

A FEW DAYS BEFORE, the other contractor who had bid on this job called Jonathan, offering his services at a reduced price if for some reason the deal with Apple Corps went awry. Jonathan insisted that he had a moral commitment to Apple Corps, but the other builder's call made him realize that he felt that he was going to pay for it—the other builder had good credentials too. By his own standards Jonathan has negotiated very gently with Jim and has asked for only a small, token concession. He assumed that Jim would accept, and he imagined a handshake and in the next day or two another ceremonial gathering of the Souweines and the carpenters at the site. It was just a small daydream, which Jim has destroyed. Jonathan is openly angry, at last.

In the bar downstairs from his office Jonathan tells Judith that he has given up bargaining. He says to Judith, "I'll tell you the truth. He makes me uptight. I feel if I say the wrong thing, he'll get offended. Tell you the truth, I'm not worried about the money. I'm worried about the deal. If he can't pull it together on one night, how's he going to pull it together on the house?"

Judith says, "I'm flabbergasted that we're going to spend a hundred and fifty thousand dollars and not have a garage." Of the \$660, she remarks, "It's somewhat symbolic, obviously. But it's not totally symbolic. It's six hundred and sixty dollars we've got to earn, you know."

Now, in the bar, Jonathan takes her arm. "Let's go home."

JIM AND SANDY, his wife, sit up till past midnight. "I don't mind the money so much as the way I'm being treated," he says. "I'm being handled. It's like going to buy a used car. Well, maybe not. He wants me to be less rigid. It's like he's trying to reform me. The bit about my loosening up. What do they mean? What do they care about what I do? Is that how you welcome someone into your family?"

"Weren't they saying, 'Come on, you're not as pure as that?'" Sandy asks. "'You're cheating us by at least this much money.' What they said to you over and over is that everybody bargains. They've got to shake that out of you."

"If I keep feeling the way I do," Jim tells her, "the job won't come out as well as it would have this morning. It'll come out six hundred and sixty dollars less good, and that's what bothers me. I hate that, because that's not the way I want to work."

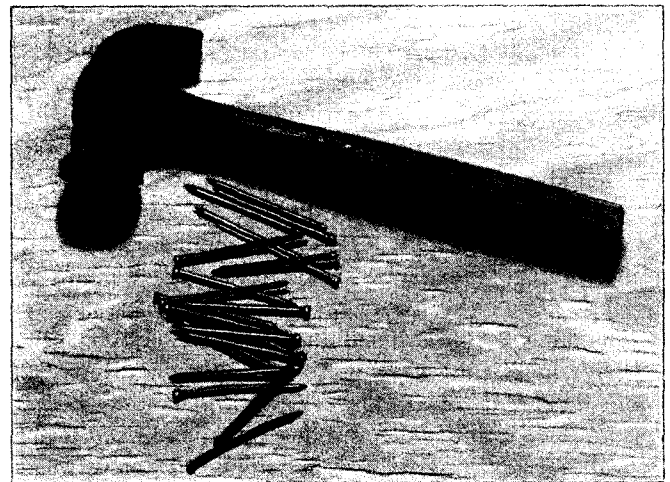
Sandy looks sad. She says, "I just don't want to face another summer of your getting up and going to a job because you have to."

Just before they turn in, Sandy remembers their mortgage. Have they paid it? "It's not the end of the month yet," Jim says, touching her shoulder. "Don't worry about it. You don't have to pay mortgages until the end of the month."

JIM CALLS JONATHAN AND accepts Jonathan's terms. A few days later they sign the contract. Jim goes over each detail with care. He offers his hand to Jonathan, and Jonathan, glad the hard bargaining is over, takes it with an enthusiasm that surprises Jim. Jonathan gets the better grip, consequently. Afterward Jonathan feels pleased at Jim's approach to the contract. "A man who says he's worried about putting his name on a piece of paper is a man who cares about his word. Jim is a person of integrity. I feel very comfortable having him build my house."

Jim leaves contemplating the handshake. Even in that transaction, he thinks, Jonathan insisted on getting the better of him.

For the next two months not a week passes without Jim or one of his partners remarking on the affair of the \$660. Usually Jim speaks of that sum as money that was taken from them. Generally he says so while they are performing some little task not specifically required by the contract.



LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF MAY 16 JIM SITS AT AN old metal desk positioned under the eaves of his attic, in the old house that he and Sandy recently bought. You can hear the rain on the roof. Jim sits beneath uncovered insulation; carpenters often inhabit unfinished space. He rests his chin in one hand and stares at the drawing he has begun. He's making a bird's-eye view of the underpinnings of the first floor of the incipient house. Jim has never planned a job of framing quite as intricate as this one. He works on it after supper. By the time he finishes, his framing plan looks like an urban street map and the rest of his household has turned in.

Jim arises near dawn. Just as his favorite weatherman, over in Albany, promised, the sky out the windows looks perfectly clear. While his house is quiet, just to prove he isn't nervous Jim sits in his kitchen and reads a chapter of his current novel. Then he slips the framing plan into his leather case and hits the road.

Jim has a long way to go to get from that complicated-looking drawing to a house built on schedule and for a

profit, but today he will have company. Help should already be on the way, from Apple Valley.

At the site the foundation's gray walls sit amid wet, rutted, sandy ground and heaps of muddy loam. The foundation looks like a hypothesis drawn in the midst of confusion. Ned Krutsky pulls in just after Jim, and together they pick up various measuring tools to find out if the foundation is as good as it looks.

Ned is about the same height as Jim and much bigger, thin at the waist and huge in the shoulders and chest, where he looks positively swollen this morning, all bundled up in wool. Above his wire-rimmed glasses his hair is cut in the shape of an inverted bowl. At the moment he looks somber and slightly fierce. When he takes up a position on top of the foundation, holding a long, numbered staff in place for Jim, Ned looks like a sentinel on a castle wall.

Jim and Ned stretch a long tape measure across the foundation. Jim holds the tape's smart end, as they say, reading the numbers. "Well, look at that, why doncha." All the way around, the foundation measures half an inch smaller than specified, which is perfect—or, as Jim says, perfect enough. Jim and Ned measure across opposite corners: a Euclidean trick. If the diagonal distances match, then the foundation's corners are square. Jim looks at the tape and then looks up, astonished. The corners are perfectly square, or as close to that immaculate condition as their tools can determine. Jim measures again and then reels in the long tape, bringing Ned with it. Jim grins. He turns a thumb up as Ned approaches. "That's not classic," he says to Ned. "That never happens!"

"Shhhh," Ned says.

"That's what Sandy says," Jim remarks more softly. "Don't rile the gods."

Today all the omens are good. The excavator shows up on time. Then the lumber-company truck. Then the electrician. Then Richard, with the generators, which they'll use to run their power tools until they get electricity.

"Hell-o, Jim. Hell-o, Ned. God it's pretty civilized down here, isn't it?"

"Yeah. No snow," Jim says.

It's May 17, 1983, the first day of carpentry on the first new house Apple Corps has touched in nearly two years. "This is great," Ned declares. "Building a new house is fun." He grins.

"I haven't built a new house in so long I've forgotten how," Richard says. He grins too. "New houses are fun. I just get the biggest kick out of it. Always have."

"And we need it," says Jim, who does not grin. "For solidarity. For money. Mostly for money."

The three carpenters stand by a chest-high pile of new lumber. They wear leather boots and jeans and jackets, and Jim and Richard wear baseball caps. Jim and Richard hover over the plans a while, muttering geometry. Ned takes half a step backward and looks around him in a studied way, like a fellow on a street corner who's been stood up. Elbow on the lumber pile, Richard looks Jim right in

the eye and declares, "I'm ready to go. We're gonna breeze right through this."

From under his hat Jim smiles at Richard and says, "Yeah, this is going to take a while."

ON THE SECOND DAY the fourth partner, Alex Ghiselin, joins them. They set up, as they will every morning, a small factory beside the foundation: generator, extension cords, ladders, sawhorses, electric and hand-driven saws. Tooling up, as they call it, they buckle on belts and make themselves into roving hardware displays, hammers and numerous pouches hanging from their waists, red handkerchiefs in their back pockets, pencils behind their ears. Proper and efficient framing is the art of thinking ahead with clarity, of seeing the end in the beginning, and they have made the exercise of forethought part of their daily routine in all departments of house-raising.

Whenever they can, the carpenters assemble a portion of the frame out on the open ground, where they don't have to hang off ladders and there's room to swing their hammers freely. Then, standing on the foundation's walls and on stepladders, they install the construction—a section of floor joists, say—into its place within the frame. Most of the failures of most spare-time carpenters stem from misplaced haste: they haven't got much time. Apple Corps spends time now to save time later. It's a form of deferred gratification, which, psychologists say, is an element of true adulthood. Apple Corps has acquired a knack for looking calmly on the future. They always pause to remove any nails from boards they cast aside. The practice cuts down on tetanus shots. It was not always this way, but most of them have worked together for ten years now, and they have learned consideration.

After the sills, which are laid directly onto the foundation, come the girders and joists, the underpinnings for the plywood on which the finished floors will in turn rest. Alex and Ned construct the girders on sawhorses, nailing together three layers of spruce boards sandwich style. Ned puts down his hammer and uses his combination square to check that the upper surface of each girder is flat and smooth, or, as he puts it, "nice." The lumber becomes girders, each one too long and heavy for one man to lift. Richard assumes command of their installation.

Richard studies Jim's framing plan, scratches his head under his cap, and says, "I don't think I ever did any framing quite like this before."

The girders span the width of the house, all thirty feet of it, and Jim had the foundation builder make pockets in the concrete wall for the ends of each girder to rest upon. The men move around the sandy ground, carrying the first floor, piece by piece, to the deep gray rectangle at the center of the pickup trucks, sawhorses, stacks of lumber, cartons of nails. Soon floor joists begin to cover the space above the cellar hole, like bars above a cage. Jim dances out onto the joists, tightrope walking. Deliberately he makes the joists wobble from side to side. The generator putts. Hammers driving sixteen-penny nails ring like high-

pitched bells, deepening with every stroke. Sometimes the carpenters syncopate their hammers, but that's by accident. When you close your eyes and listen to the men working, the voices you most often hear belong to Richard and Alex.

After Dartmouth, Alex worked as an advance man in Senator Eugene McCarthy's presidential campaign and as a reporter in New Hampshire, first for a local paper and then for *The Boston Globe*. He was a good journalist. He is a meticulous, hardworking carpenter. What he loves most is farming. Alex has a little farm between the Connecticut and Deerfield rivers. He supports it by carpentry. It was Alex who put up the \$2,000 that got Apple Corps started in business a decade ago. His partners call him chubby, though he isn't really, and there's a gentleness about him, a country doctor's air, that would make him suitable for pushing pharmaceuticals on TV. He drives to the site in his pickup in the morning, with his huge, floppy-eared, dark-red Irish setter, Brewster, sitting shoulder to shoulder beside him. Brewster looks like some cheerful, slightly dimwitted young apprentice in a dog suit.

The bottom deck of the house begins to cover the cellar hole. The house becomes a platform. The days are growing warm. Jim and Alex had painted the outside of the foundation with tar before the bulldozer returned and pushed the dirt back up against the walls. The tar will help to keep the basement dry. They had placed insulation under the sills; the house will be cozier for it. The crowning of every floor joist will tend to keep the floors from sagging over the years. The contract requires none of this specifically, but these little pains that they take, and many others like them, constitute good and reasonable building practice. As for precision in framing—cutting, measuring, and nailing—Jim insists that it will make the finish work go smoothly.

At lunch they take stock. Sometimes they do business. They sit together on the deck, cross-legged in a circle. With mock sneakiness, Richard slowly withdraws from his wicker lunch basket a check at last received from one of the winter's customers. Richard folds the check into a paper airplane and floats it to Alex, who catches it as if he's found a butterfly and says, "A kited check."

Alex, who is serving as the company treasurer this year, passes around the new ink-pad stamps that he says he plans to apply to customers' bills, but won't, of course. One stamp says "Pay or Die," and the other, over a picture of a man encumbered with several casts, warns, "Penalty for Late Payment."

Jim wonders whether Alex should send one of those to Jonathan. Would Jonathan take it wrong? Would Jim feel pleased or sorry if he did?

THE FRAME OF THE house is rising, and the carpenters and their clients seem to be drifting toward the condition of strangers. In the mornings Jim finds around the site small neat piles of nails, ones they have bent and discarded, and also evidence that someone has been clearing out the un-

dergrowth in the woods beside the brook, and he guesses that the Souweines have come by in the evenings, the children collecting nails while Jonathan clears brush.

They get used to seeing Judith regularly but for now usually just in passing. Jonathan they see less often. Once, after they spend most of a day working in the rain, Florence Wiener invites the damp, muddy crew into her kitchen for coffee, and they come away murmuring about Judith's mother's graciousness and wit. The person they see most often is Judith's father, Jules. He drops by nearly every day and stays a while.

Jules is of middling height, a fit and very active sixty-year-old. He's smoking cigars these days. He's reveling in his retirement. It's an even bet as to whether he's doing more now than he was when he was officially working. He does a little law for Jonathan's firm, serves on a local committee or two, breeds racehorses, studies racing sheets, builds fences, mows and plants with his hired man. Jules's time belongs to him, though, and he likes to spend some of it with the builders.

Jules stands beside the foundation and watches Jim work. Jim is completing the framing around what will become the hearth. He has to join one piece of wood to another at an angle greater than ninety degrees. He has to make a miter joint in the frame. Tongue protruding, Jim makes the mitered cuts on the ends of a piece of two-by-ten and puts the board in place, but he doesn't nail it there. Evidently, Jim doesn't like the way it fits.

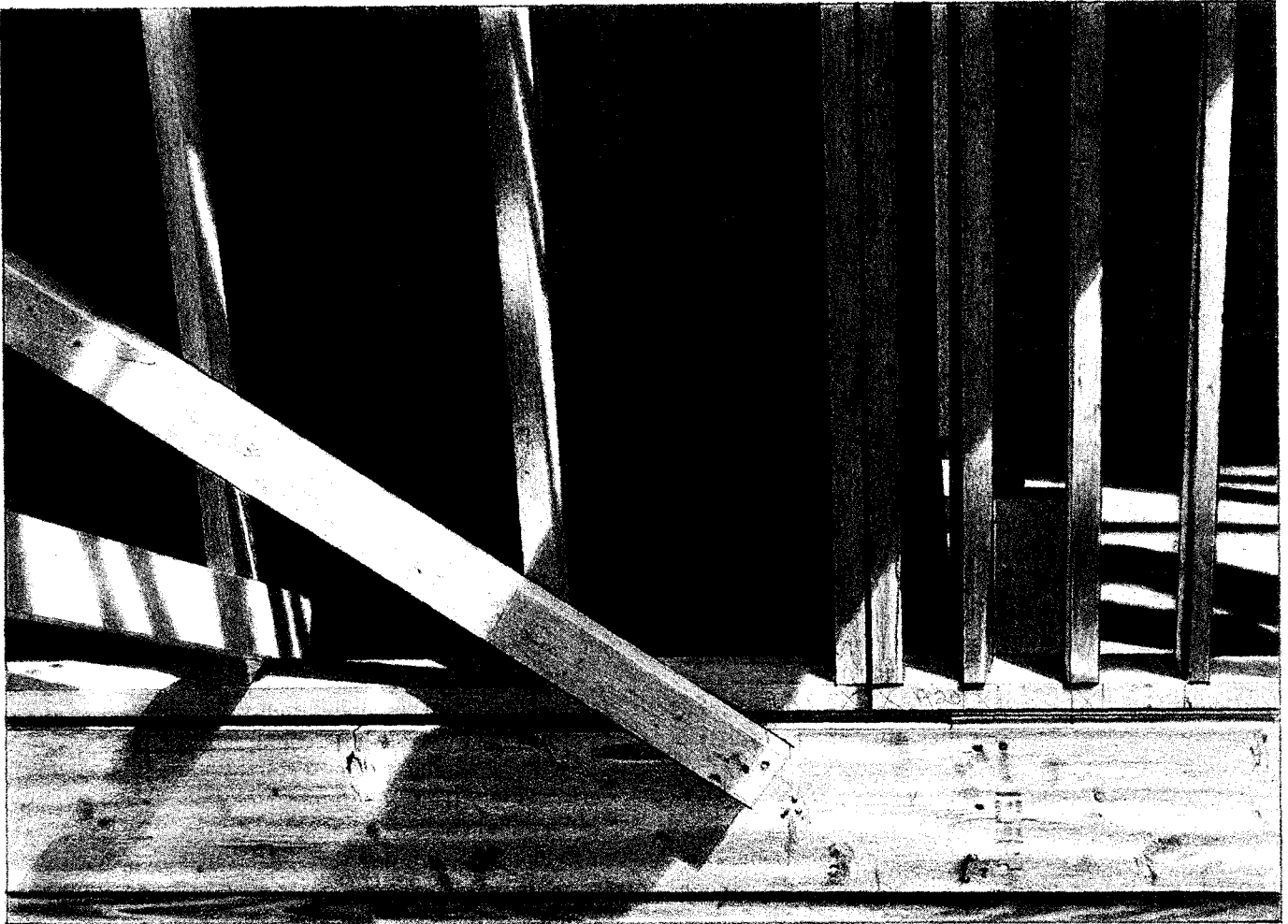
Jules watches, surprised. Jim tosses that board away and cuts another. He goes through all the motions again. This time Jim seems to like the fit. It looks perfect, in fact, from where Jules stands. It will not show. It will be covered up. Besides, that neater joint is not a stronger one. To himself, Jules says, "These guys aren't builders. They're craftsmen." He has no worries now about the quality of the house his daughter and son-in-law are getting. His observation isn't an unmixed compliment, though. Jules is a businessman, after all.

By the end of May they've finished the bottom deck and have begun to raise the walls. Pausing to take stock at their morning powwow over coffee, Jim says, "Whoever thought it would take so long to frame this bottom deck?"

"We're doing okay," Richard says. "It's about what we estimated, isn't it?"

"But this is the time when we usually do better than we expected," Alex says. "This is when we make up for later."

THE HOUSE LOOKS LIKE A PAIR OF ADJACENT BOXES, one large, one small, a child's outsized building blocks, with many rectangular holes in the plywood walls. To Bill Rawn, though, it is a new reality. Bill has made other inspections while Apple Corps was building, but the house lacked shape the last time he saw it. Now Bill can see the refined adult in the gawky child, and he is so moved he can hardly speak at first.



Bill and Judith stand gazing at the south wall from the field above—the Wiffle Ball field, Judith and Jonathan call it, though in spite of their efforts it is as much sand as grass and what grass there is has grown crunchy underfoot.

“Don’t you think when you get it all lined up, it starts being a little special?” Bill says to Judith, in a deep voice on the verge of cracking.

“Bill, don’t be defensive,” Judith says. “It’s very nice.”

Jim shows them around inside. Some of the partitions, the ones that help to bear the weight of the second floor, are in place. There are, as Ned has remarked, lots of places to hide in now. In the dappled sunlight that comes down into the roofless house, the uncovered lumber turns golden and light orange. Apple Corps has not yet built a rough staircase, so the party ascends to the second story on a ladder. “This is totally unbelievable,” Judith says when she gets to the top. “Jonathan got up here and said we had to put the principal room up here. Maybe I’ll move up here.”

“It really is an extraordinary view,” Bill says.

The house has risen above some treetops. From the second floor they can see Castor and Pollux again. Those landmark maples have been invisible since the leaves came out. You can see the towers of the University of Massachusetts and, off to the east, the gently rolling woodland that stretches out most of the way to Worcester.

SUMMER HEAT ARRIVES AND so does the roof, one day in the second week of June. The roof comes in the form of another huge pile of lumber that makes the lumberyard’s truck look small. It is to be a very sturdy concoction, with triangular gussets of plywood nailed and glued as fasteners between rafters and collar ties.

Hanging off their ladders, the carpenters bolt sidewall brackets made of oak through the plywood walls and into the studs behind. Onto the brackets they heave new planks, making an open walkway along the top of the house’s walls. Each plank spans the distance between two brackets, and at each intersection the end of one plank rests on the top of the end of another, making for a two-inch-deep step. Working on this scaffold, feeling their way along it without looking down, the carpenters encounter these small steps again and again. Always the step comes unexpectedly. It’s a momentary free fall of two inches. They flinch and grimace and go on.

They set up ladders side by side, between ground and scaffold. Two men ascend in unison, on separate ladders, each holding an end of a piece of lumber. Two men up top on the scaffold take the boards from them. A chant begins: “Pain!” “Gimme more pain!”

“Ned and I got a system,” Richard says to Alex, as Alex reaches the scaffold once again.

"I *am* glad," Alex says.

"Part of it's hollerin'," Richard says.

They trade roles. Those who play the ladder men request greater diligence in bending down from the receivers up top. The receivers demand improvements in speed from the ladder men, and every so often one of them asks, "You couldn't get a hoist, eh, Jim?" In this way, piece by piece, the huge lumber pile ascends. They nail the collar ties in place, on the plates that rest on top of the two long walls. They nail and glue the gussets to the collar ties one morning. That afternoon they make the angled cuts on the upper ends of the rafters, using a drawing on the kitchen floor as a template. On the following day roof-raising commences.

It is a Friday. Jim is supposed to set out for Cape Cod with his family. He's supposed to take the day off, but he comes by the site that morning anyway and helps his partners carry up the rafters.

They are very merry, and merrier after lunch, as they erect the first rafters and sections of ridgeboard, the horizontal timber that defines the peak of the roof. Richard and Jim stand on sawhorses, holding up the ridgeboard. Ned nails rafters to the ridge on one side, Alex on the other. They secure the rafters' outer ends to the gussets. The stout rafters of Douglas fir, which are pink like fillets of salmon, make a widening tent above them.

"I feel real good about this detail," Ned says, running a hand over one of the plywood gussets.

"A lot of these old roofs were way underbuilt," says Richard, restorer of old houses. "Not this one, though. And this house is framed to the thirty-second of an inch, right to the ridge."

In fact, the rafters meet the ridgeboard nearly perfectly. Richard stops nailing to say, "We should do like they do with a sports car, with a gold plaque that tells how fast it's gone. We should have a little gold plaque in the attic: Framed to a Thirty-second."

A voice calls from below. It's Judith. "'Lo," Richard says, looking down from the eastern edge of the building.

"Ooh la la," Judith says. "It's wonderful. It looks like a house."

"We'll have you in by Easter," Richard says.

"Oh, great," she calls back. "But we don't celebrate Easter. How 'bout Passover?"

"Okay. Just give me a few Easter eggs," Richard says.

"We don't want to push you," Judith says. "We'll just be in our tent all that time."

When Judith leaves, Richard muses, "If we don't get done until next Easter, it'll cost us a lot of money." He's thinking of those hundred-dollar-a-day penalties for not being done by the end of October.

"Yup," Alex says. "They'll have it for just about free."

"Well, think of it, Alex," Richard says. "Today we're working for free."

"Because it's such a nice day?"

"No," Richard says. "Because we were supposed to finish the roof yesterday."

Ned laughs. Alex laughs. They are very merry today.

Apple Corps has always attached a bough from an evergreen tree to the roof of a new house frame. "We do it," Richard says, "because someone else did it before us." Ned can't remember anyone following the custom when he worked for his father in Pennsylvania. He began to follow it when he got to New England, and for the same reason that Richard did—other, older builders did it. To Ned, the custom feels right. He does not know just what to choose. He counts the Douglas fir among the noblest of trees, but it grows only out west. The house is too cosmopolitan in wood to make this job easy. The white pine, though, is New England's tallest, most elegant and precious softwood. Ned takes a white-pine bough from the woods beside the brook and carries it up the ladder.

Ned wears a pair of black combat boots, shorts with ragged hems, and nothing else. He has gone bronze in the sun. He stands on tiptoes on the scaffold under the ridge and reaches up toward the top of the house, the greenery in one hand, his hammer in the other. Reaching up with difficulty, frozen for a moment against pink rafters and blue sky, Ned is statuary in the heroic tradition.

"A good day," Alex says. "Fun times. Much more fun than putting tar on the foundation wall."

Casting backward glances, they amble over to Jules's driveway. "This is going to be one stately-looking house," Richard says. "It's going to be wonderful." They stare up at the roof. The house, a box this morning, now looks very tall. It begins, as Bill would say, to stand with its shoulders up. "This is *neat*," Richard goes on. "I never thought I'd get a chance to build a house with all the stuff this one's going to have on it. It's like building a thirty-two Ford, you know?"

Ned laughs. "Ah, Richard."

They stare at it a while longer.

"A *proud* building," Ned says.

All the way down the driveway, they glance back over their shoulders at what they have built.

APPLE CORPS USUALLY COLLABORATED WITH CUSTOMERS on designs, and the carpenters liked to build that way. To imagine, then to build—there's a roundness to that kind of work that's pleasing. The carpenters liked the intimacy and the friendliness that sometimes came from serving people with their ideas about houses as well as with their manual skills. Building was never quite the same with an architect involved. Apple Corps made plenty of mistakes all on their own, of course, but somehow those weren't as memorable as the ones that architects caused.

Chatting in his kitchen with Sandy and a friend one day, Jim says, "When you see a house written up in *The New York Times Magazine*, they usually give the name of just the architect and the owner, and I think the builder has every right to be pissed off." Jim leans against his kitchen counter. "The thing about the architect is, the architect is

sort of the artist, and the practical person who works with his hands always disdains the architect. Why should a guy be able to make a living doing that, just because his head works in a different way? But there are these things that Bill should know, and I have to come up with them."

Jim raises his voice slightly. "I've got to bring reality to the Souweines. *He* brings them the pretty pictures. I bring that." Jim smacks his fist into his open palm. "I've got to bring them that." He punches his hand once more. "And that," he says, and then he smiles.

AFTERWARD, WHEN THE AFFAIR of the frieze board has run its course, each party will give a different accounting. Apple Corps will blame Bill, who will mildly blame Jim, and Judith and Jonathan will blame both Bill and Jim. They could as easily conjure up a trickster god who oversees construction sites. Jim plans to put on the shingles once the roof is framed, so Jim gives Bill "a reprieve" on some of the drawings, including the drawing of the cornice.

The Souweines, meanwhile, have begun again to worry that the design of their house has grown excessively distinctive. Jonathan stands in the driveway, looking up at the frame of the house. "Enough is enough. It has a taste of a Greek temple. Fine. But it's not a Greek temple, and we're not Greeks." He and Judith have resolved to put red shingles on their roof. "That gives it a little color, a little fun, in what could be a pretentious house," Jonathan says. He thinks the red roof will resemble a necktie, he says. He owns a few ties with generous amounts of color in them. He grins.

But New Englanders, Jim learns to his slight surprise, have not taken to red shingles. No one has them in stock. Apple Corps will have to wait, and in the meantime, the only thing they can do is build the cornice, the trim that will go just below the roof. So they start on it about a week earlier than Jim had intended.

Jim drives to his favorite lumberyard in Amherst to buy pine boards for the cornice. He goes to that yard partly because they let him choose his wood himself. The specifications call for number-two pine on the exterior, which generally means white pine with knots in it. There are knots and there are knots, though. Dead knots, roots of branches that died before the tree did, tend to fall out of a board. Knots left by living branches will bleed through paint, but you can treat them for that, and they won't fall out. Nonetheless, number-one pine for the cornice would cost at least \$1,000 extra. The Souweines seem strapped for cash now. Jim feels sure that Jonathan wouldn't spring for number-one pine, so he doesn't bother to ask. Jim does spend over an hour, in the lumberyard's fragrant hangar full of wood, searching through piles of pine, rejecting every board with dead knots in it, except for one. He can't find any more boards without dead knots, so he has to take one that has them, and he decides to make that board symbolic. He looks it over and addresses this remark to it, as he loads it on his pickup: "There, Jonathan, there's your six hundred and sixty dollars."

Jonathan has been telling Bill that he has to get the remaining drawings out to Amherst much faster than he has been doing. Bill is now searching for an assistant, but somehow he finds the time to draw the cornice in detail. The drawing makes it plain that two wide frieze boards are supposed to be built out three and a half inches from the wall. Jim picks up the drawing of the cornice on the morning that Apple Corps begins to build it.

Jim and Richard feel stumped about how to build one detail of the cornice that every drawing has included. The problem has to do with the application of some crown molding to the eaves. Jim and Richard spend an hour of that morning crouched on the kitchen floor, trying to solve the problem. Preoccupied with the crown molding, Jim does not think about the frieze. He thinks he knows Bill's intentions for that detail. Jim does not consult the new drawings, the ones he just picked up at the bus station. They sit inside his leather case, over in a corner.

They've built the cornice and the red shingles have arrived when Jim calls Jonathan to talk about the stairs. Jim mentions, by the way, that they've improved on a feature of Bill's plan. The improvement has to do with the crown molding on the eaves.

Jonathan doesn't know exactly what Jim's talking about, but he does not like the sound of it. Neither does Judith.

Back when they got stumped over Bill's drawing for that molding, Richard declared, "That isn't proper." He decided to apply the crown molding differently, the way the old-timers used to, a modification that cost Apple Corps about \$30—a small price for propriety. A few weeks later, passing by an old house in his truck, Richard stops and, looking up, sees that very same molding applied in just the way that Bill had specified. "Whoops."

The crown molding is a false issue, though. Troubled by Jim's call, Jonathan phones Bill and tells him he'd better come to Amherst soon. Bill must visit anyway, to talk to Jim about redesigning the staircase.

A tall wooden ladder leans against the high staging on the front end of the house. It wobbles as Jim climbs. Bill follows, looking slightly nervous. He stares at the crown molding. He shrugs. "It's different than what I expected," he tells Jim. "I don't have a lot of problems with it."

When Bill drove up to the house, he noticed the knots in the cornice right away. He decided not to think of them again. Too many other potentially explosive subjects already lay between him and Jim. Every time he has glanced up at the house, though, Bill has seen those little round black spots, like pox on the crisply installed trim beneath the roof. After a while, when Bill looks at the house he can see hardly anything but knots, and he can't contain his worry.

"I assume there's no problem with knots in the trim wood?"

Jim looks up with widened eyes.

"I wondered why we didn't have clearer pine," Bill adds.

"Because it isn't in the contract," Jim says. He explains

the issue as he sees it. Then Judith comes over and the meeting ends.

It's late. The other carpenters have left. Jim heads for his truck. "Are we okay, Jim?" Bill calls.

"I don't know what you mean by 'okay,'" Jim replies. He adds, "I'm just in a hurry. I'm not upset."

Then it's just Judith and Bill, in front of the shell of the house in the bright summer evening.

Judith says that she fears they must write a change order for the master bathroom's fixtures.

GREEN THUMB

No bigger than a thumb
and palest green,
a tree frog
has stowed away
on one of the plants
my husband brought inside
for winter,
and in the darkness
it fills the spaces
of this house
with disproportionate
song. The dogs bark,
fearing a creature
they cannot see,
and partly to quiet them
we search in vain
among the stems
and roots and leaves
for that balloon
of swollen sound—
either lovelorn,
or joyful, or hungry.
I'm never sure
I want the woods inside,
though circumscribed in pots
these plants seem safe enough—
contained explosions of green
at every frozen window.
Whatever my husband touches
grows. Tonight when he
touches me, black earth
still rings the moons
of all his nails.
I think it is a naked
infant's call
the tree frog's song
reminds me of.

—Linda Pastan

Bill grasps her arm and lays his head upon her shoulder for a moment, a contortionist's trick for big Bill to perform with little Judith, and he says, "Look, my friend, if that's the only change order that comes out of today's conversation, you'll be lucky."

Bill tells her about the knots. She says, "They did an awfully nice job."

"Oh, yeah!" Bill says, with feeling. But those knots are driving him crazy, he tells her.

"There's some things you can worry about, but I think it's a little late for this one," she says. Bill tells her clear pine would cost \$1,000 extra. She says, "Forget it, Bill." In a moment she leaves him standing there, in front of the skeleton of his first house.

Didn't the contract call for clear pine? Bill asks himself. He stares up at the cornice and laughs a short, deep, sorrowful laugh. "Funny how something like that can really get to you. Boy! I'm really. . ." Bill knows those knots will bleed through the paint. He's always thought of knots that show as a sign of general shoddiness. He suspects that the contract doesn't call for clear pine. He has always specified it on buildings in the past, on occasions when wooden trim was involved. "I'm surprised I didn't catch that."

Bill gazes up at the cornice, and suddenly he looks puzzled. He walks backward, away from the house, all the way back to the Wieners' woodpile. He tilts his head, for a slightly sidelong view. He makes his hand a visor for his eyes, and he says softly, "I always thought it came out a couple of inches from the face of the house." He stares. "It's. . ." He laughs. Then he groans, "Ohhhhhh," like someone desperate for bed.

The frieze, one of the most important elements in Bill's synthesis of Greek Revival, lies flat against the house, a broad band extending out just the thickness of the boards that make up the frieze. Those boards are only slightly thicker than the clapboards that will lie below them. The frieze won't stand out to meet the eye. It won't create the proper look at all. "It just doesn't seem substantial enough."

Bill gazes. He groans. He tries out reassurance. "It'll look a lot better." But he adds, "It better. Because it looks really weak right now." He laughs, and it sounds like an echo from an old well. "You pour so much of your soul into it," he says. "It's very different from most fields. There are so many vagaries that can change things and explain why it didn't come out in exactly the form of your vision." Bill stands beside the Wieners' woodpile, staring up in the evening light at the tall, elegantly proportioned skeleton. Standing in that same spot ten days ago, Ned called the building "proud." Bill says, "It's so funny, because every time I look at this house now, all that I can see is the frieze."

THE FOLLOWING MORNING BILL and Judith and Jonathan, who is dressed for the office, hover in a ring around Jim. He sits on the opened tailgate of his truck, a pencil behind his ear, and extracts from his leather case the most recent and detailed drawing of the cornice.

"There was always an assumption that the frieze would extend out from the face of the house," Bill says.

Jim studies the drawing for the first time. He looks up at Bill. "Well, I guess the solution is to get the drawings before we build the house." Jim throws the papers down onto the tailgate. He stares at Bill. Judith and Jonathan glance at each other and don't speak.

"It's been different from the way you did it all along," Bill says.

"Not all along." Jim picks up the blueprint and shakes it. "These drawings right here are dated six-fourteen. It's making me mad, all this stuff." He hurls the plans down, glaring up at Bill. Bill and the Souweines stand around the angry builder, wearing helpless, worried looks.

"Your drawings have all these assumptions and implications in them," Jim says. "Now I feel I'm on the carpet."

"I'm on the carpet too," Bill says, very softly. "My feeling is we have to try to correct the frieze in some way that makes sense."

Jim looks away. He takes a deep breath. He gazes up at the frieze. He studies the drawings again.

Jonathan doesn't understand the problem fully. Judith explains it to him, to one side. Smiling, she tells Jonathan that perhaps the solution is to change not the frieze but the name of the house's architectural style. "Maybe we can call it something else."

Jonathan returns her smile. "It'll explain why the Greek Revival didn't sustain itself."

"There are more drawings on this house than on most five-hundred-thousand-dollar houses," Bill says to Jim, very softly.

Jim studies the detailed drawing once again. "It's on here," he says. "I guess I didn't have it in my mind that way."

Bill stares up at the frieze, chin on hand. Jim stares up at the frieze, a forefinger against his lips. "Hey, Bill, what about the idea of having the frieze go down a little lower?"

"Below the vents?" Bill asks. "I think that would look very strange." Jim's solution would not preserve the proper effect, the sense of a roof floating on the frieze.

"It would be neat," Jim says. "There'd be a line there under the soffits."

They stare upward.

"I would like to be able to say that that's good," Bill says. He looks pained. "I just don't think it is."

The architect and the builder go back to silent, upward staring. There is, it seems, no other way around the problem but for Apple Corps to take down the frieze and put it up again. The repair looks hard to Jim, because they assembled the cornice so carefully and because to change the frieze they must alter the soffits. The repair will mean, among other things, that one of the carpenters must spend a day or more inching along a high staging on his back, cutting over his head with a skillsaw while twenty feet up in the air. A neat job won't be easy. Jim says he doesn't want to ask anyone to do that job.

Jonathan has to get to the office. Bill and Jim should try

to find a way to fix the frieze, he says. Then Jonathan turns to the subject of the knots and Jim has the feeling all at once that he is in the witness box in court. "I would consider it an acceptable solution if you will warrant that the knots won't come through the paint for five years," Jonathan says to Jim, "since I do have tremendous respect for your integrity and judgment as a builder and I know you wouldn't put anything there that wasn't satisfactory."

"JONATHAN'S STRATEGY. IT'S REAL familiar. I'm used to it. 'You're a real good, a great, craftsman and I know you wouldn't do anything wrong, so why did you?' It's just what my father would do," Jim says.

Apple Corps has retreated to an Amherst sandwich shop for coffee.

"The frieze?" Richard cries. They will not redo the frieze, Richard declares.

"I was ready to punch that guy," Jim says, referring to Bill. "It feels really funny. I never felt that way about anybody before." He explains that Bill won't accept the easy-looking solution.

Ned says to Jim, "He seems kind of soft and mild in his requests."

"That's just his manner," Jim says. "He gets an idea, he sticks to it."

"I knew it was going to be like this," Alex says. "An arm-wrestling match."

They vote. It's unanimous. They will not guarantee the knots. Three of them vote no on repairing the frieze. When that ballot reaches Jim, though, he doesn't vote. He says, "I wish these issues were perfectly clear. I'm not quite sure when those plans arrived."

"Aw, shoot," Richard says. "I'll take your skillsaw, get up there, and thrash it. I don't mind. I'll do it on my back with a rope around my neck."

Ned searches for a general explanation and a remedy. "I sort of feel Jonathan and Judith need to know how much of an imposition this guy's being on us," Ned says. "The guy wants to build a Cadillac, and they only want to buy a Chevrolet."

"They know he's upping the ante all the time," Jim tells Ned. Jim lifts opened palms to his partners, that old gesture of innocence, and says, "Everybody knows everything. But everybody wants something different."

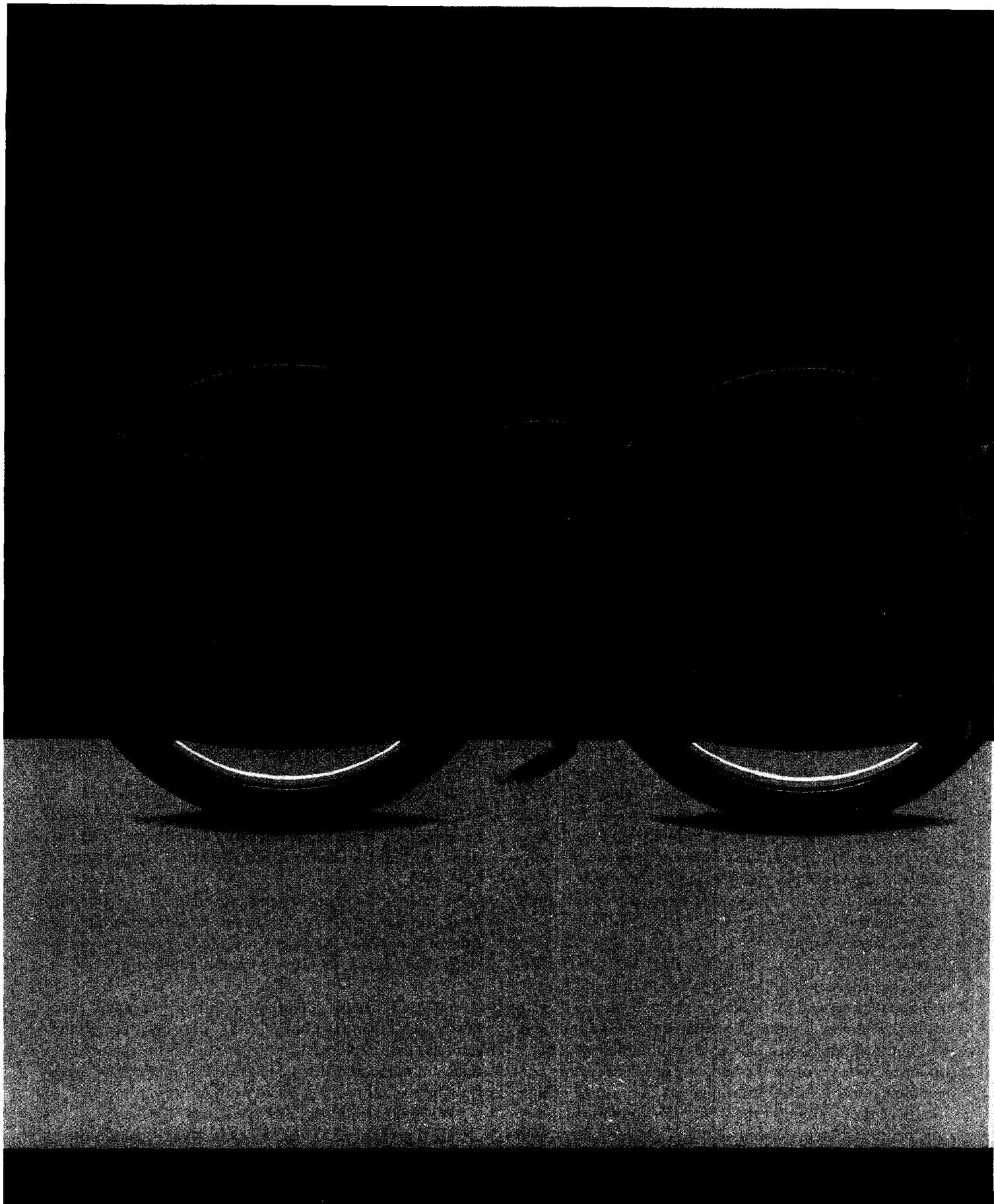
APPLE CORPS HOLDS A conference on how to become more businesslike than they have been—an annual, sometimes semi-annual, soul-search of an event at which many motions are made and many are tabled. Tonight they agree that they ought to think about hiring a lawyer.

"We could hire Jonathan," Ned says.

"He'd probably do great things for us," Richard says.

"I wouldn't be surprised if he was *real* good," Jim says.

When Jonathan sent them his first bill, they could knock \$660 off it, Jim says. They laugh and turn to other business, but they meant what they said. They believe that Jonathan could handle their problems easily—the



OFFICE AUTOMATION: HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Sometime last year American business crossed a technological Rubicon. For the first time in our history, capital investment per office worker exceeded that per factory hand.

Like it or not, information has finally surpassed material goods as our basic resource.

Walter Wriston, ex-Citicorp chief, likens information to a new form of capital, one that is arguably "more critical to the future of the American economy than money capital."

Every day brings news of faster, smaller, more capable devices to serve the 70% of us who now work with this new form of capital.

But while the trend spotters on

continued on next page

—continued from preceding page—

their mountaintops cheer this "Second Industrial Revolution," the view from the front lines is not so rosy.

Too often, new devices are an uneasy fit with their sister machines of just a year ago. Too often, systems intended to simplify office life have the opposite effect. Grouses one manager: "The more business machines we buy, the more we seem to need."

Change is rampant. The stakes are high. Confusion is king.

RASCALS. The best way to make sense of all this technology may be to ignore the whole business for a week

or so and think about how your office works instead.

Who uses what kind of information? Where does it come from? What do they do with it?

No company on earth has pockets so deep that it can afford to automate every aspect of its business. Some hard choices lie ahead.

Item: In a typical office, 75% of the salary dollars go to managers and professionals. The system that spares these expensive rascals from a morning meeting or an hour of returning phone calls may be a better investment than one that does a whole day's work for someone else.

Item: The lion's share of time spent in any office is spent *communicating*:

listening, talking, chasing down stray facts, dealing with mail.

Were you to keep a log, you'd be appalled by how little time you have for actually producing "work." (Par for senior executives: about 15%.)

To leverage time, look for ways to *move* information more efficiently.

A desktop computer can perform in minutes the spreadsheet analyses that used to gobble hours. But how much is gained if the figures still walk from office to office in a mail cart?

Item: Streamlining the internal workings of your office may be less profitable than automating ties with customers or suppliers.

Japanese style "just in time" deliveries from suppliers are helping U.S. automakers slash inventory costs. Computerized flight information systems have given some airlines a strategic advantage with travel agents.

No company succeeds alone.

No company on earth has pockets so deep that it can afford to automate every aspect of its business. Some hard choices lie ahead.

BALANCE. Complicating the question of where your systems dollar is best spent is where you spent it last time out. And the time before that. A lot of past choices are coming back to haunt today's manager.

Reason: most of the systems clicking away in offices today were purchased a la carte — when phones were phones, computers were computers, and "office automation" meant word processing and copiers.

Now the walls between these separate technologies are tumbling down.

Some office telephone systems can now process data. Computers have evolved that can communicate.

It's dawning on customers and vendors alike that the future belongs to

“

Today's customer must strike a balance between making the most of what's on hand and fighting like crazy to keep next year's options open.

the *integrated* business system.

Today's customer must strike a balance between making the most of what's on hand and fighting like crazy to keep next year's options open.

MISSING LINKS. Between today's a la carte systems and the office-wide, integrated everything of tomorrow is ... what?

For many companies, the missing links are *networks*. By permitting different kinds of computers and other devices to share information, networks can pull today's stand-alone business machines into organized "islands" of automation.

Since these islands themselves can

be networked together, users can widen the scope of automation in an organization pretty much at will.

Some companies have the backbone of an *office-wide* network already in place. Today's digital telephone switching systems (PBXs) convert speech into the same "bits" and "bytes" that computers use.

This means that many an existing telephone network can double as a highway for business data — and that "office automation" need have no geographic limits.

A plug for the home team: Every vendor does some things better than the other guys. While communications and data networks are drawing-board doodles in some shops, they

are bread and butter items at AT&T.

It may be AT&T's greatest strength that we can integrate new and existing systems whether we provide *all* of those systems, or *some* of those systems, or the bridges between them.

✓

SUCCESS. Like the first Industrial Revolution, this one will lift some companies and confound others.

Those without a coherent plan to manage information in *all* its forms — the spoken word, thoughts on paper, images, and computer data — will be at a disadvantage.

In the long run, your success with office automation will have less to do with whose machines you buy — or how many — than with how freely information travels among them. It is the relationships you set up *between* the machines, not the devices themselves, that will tell the tale.

P.S. Much of this message was drawn from *The Integration Puzzle*, a two-day seminar offered by AT&T's Institute for Communications and Information Management. For further information or for a catalogue of AT&T Seminars in eight cities, please telephone 1 800 247-1212.

Or write Mr. Dale Hegstrom, AT&T Information Systems, P.O. Box 1405, Morristown, NJ 07960-1405.



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The right choice.

customers who take months to pay, for instance—if he handled their problems half as adroitly as he has handled them. It seems to Jim that every time they meet to discuss money these days, Jonathan begins by praising Apple Corps. Jonathan closes a big meeting on change orders in the same way: “I think this went exactly as I hoped it would. Not everyone’s happy about everything, but that’s life. . . . Again, keep up the good work. The house is looking great. Everyone who sees it says so.” He turns to Jim and Richard. “The work looks great.” He turns to Bill. “The design looks great.” And then he’s gone.

At these moments Jim feels as if he’s being played in several keys at once. He is reminded of a phrase from an old song whose name he can’t remember: “a handful of gimme and a mouthful of much obliged.” But Jonathan’s praise also sounds authentic to Jim. It pleases Jim to hear it, and it dismays him to feel the strength ebb from the grudges that he’s nurtured—just when he needs them most, to make himself want to hold the line in every disagreement from now on. When Jonathan raised the issue of the knots and said, in effect, You’re a fine builder, so I know you’ll guarantee those knots, Jim was so disarmed that he didn’t think to describe the pains he had taken to do more than the specifications required and find the best number-two pine he could. The upshot of the subsequent meeting with Jonathan looked like a symmetrical exchange. Apple Corps gave in on the frieze without an argument, and Jonathan gave in almost as easily on the knots. But when Jim thinks about it afterward, the trade seems less than even to him. He and Richard yielded on a somewhat debatable issue—one very early drawing had shown the frieze nailed flat against the house—while Jonathan merely acceded to the undeniable fact that the specs called for number-two and therefore knotty pine. Jonathan leaves them feeling fairly contented, though, and impressed that they are.

“He’s a pro,” Jim says, a while after Jonathan has left.

“Yeah, he is,” says Richard, who has just seen Jonathan in action for the first time.

“THE REALITY IS THAT if these guys weren’t quality workmen and quality people, there’d be fewer problems,” Jonathan reflects. “They’d say, ‘Fine,’ and then just go and do what they wanted. You know why I gave in on the knots? Suppose Jim said, ‘Okay, I’ll guarantee the paint.’ Suppose four years later I called: ‘The knots bled through.’ What could I do if he said no, he wouldn’t fix them? But the point is, if Jim said to me he would do it, Jim would do it.”

If you sit in Jonathan’s chair and muse briefly, looking out over Main Street, it’s clear that he made an even trade on the knots and the frieze. Sure, the specs call for number-two pine, but Jim should have explained the difference between numbers one and two. Jim never said there was an option. So Jonathan did have some grounds for argument about the knots. He gave them up. Jim and Richard gave up no more in agreeing to pay for the frieze.

Jonathan remembers telling Bill again and again that one of these days something would get built wrong if Bill did not deliver drawings well ahead of time. Imagining himself as Apple Corps’s lawyer, Jonathan tells the builders, “Don’t you touch that cornice. Not until you get the detailed drawings and have time to study them.” He’d have added, “If you build it wrong, you’re screwed, and if you’re right, no one thanks you for it.” He would have advised them, “Go tell the owner his architect’s holding you up and he’s got to adjust the completion date.” As the lawyer representing himself, he figures that having hired an architect and builder, he has a right to expect them to get the house built correctly, and not to pay for their mistakes.

Jonathan feels sorry for the trouble the frieze caused, but not for the little imperfection it represents. No one else will see it, but Bill has said that even when repaired, the frieze won’t quite reproduce his intentions. Orthodox Jews have a tradition that until the Temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt, they will not erect a house or building without giving it one deliberate imperfection. Though not a member of the Orthodox branch of Judaism, Jonathan believes in the inevitability of imperfection. So why not celebrate it? “There’s a flaw in the house . . .,” he says, and he flashes a smile, a shooting star of a smile, “. . . which the pernicious part of me sort of likes.”

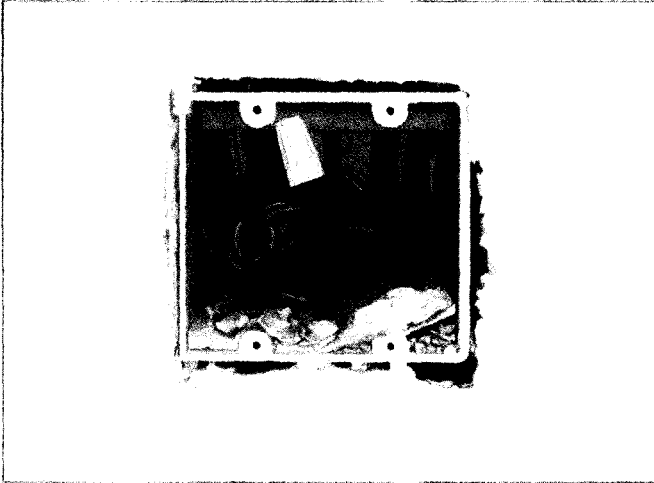
Jonathan has already agreed to pay hundreds of dollars for extras that didn’t seem like extras to him: for “kick-boards” on the front wall (those seemed to appear in the earliest drawings), for “stops” in the small fixed windows (he thought windows always came with those). And Jonathan has already struck many compromises with Jim, including some that Jonathan did not have to make—the roof, for instance. After Jim had made his original bid, he realized that Apple Corps would have to put into the roof’s frame a lot more labor and more wood than he’d imagined. Jim was only partly to blame, but Jonathan could have forced Apple Corps to shoulder the increase alone. Instead, he looked Jim in the eye and asked for a compromise. Jim said the extra labor would come to \$850, the materials to \$450. How did Jonathan feel about paying for the extra labor?

“Sounds fair to me,” Jonathan said, scribbling a note.

Jonathan had accepted the larger part of the change. Jim had returned the favor by shopping around for windows.

People he trusts told Jonathan to stretch for this new house, and he has done so. He’s had to count on selling the duplex in Pelham for a tidy profit. They put that house on the market a month ago, and almost no one has come to see it. Jonathan does not feel frightened. “We have a backup plan.” Any day now, though, Jim will hand him a stack of change orders, amounting to several thousand dollars, and Jonathan will have to raise the money. Jonathan has already agreed to some changes, without knowing their exact costs. Those he has to accept. There are some other change orders coming, ones Bill wants but Apple Corps hasn’t yet built. Jonathan does not have to sign for them.

Jonathan knows that with the kindest intentions in the world Bill and Apple Corps could arrange his bankruptcy. He wants Bill and Apple Corps to be happy with the house, but the house has already been endowed with enough elegance and expense for Jonathan.



JIM LEAVES WORK LAST AND GETS THERE FIRST. SOME mornings summer fog settles over the valley so thickly that you can hardly make out Judith's parents' place across the driveway. Then the new building seems as lonely as a lighthouse. Jim sits by himself inside the empty house, in gray light, surrounded by gray walls, his calculator on one knee, a yellow pad on the other.

Jim got the sheetrockers to agree to begin hanging the interior walls and ceilings on July 15. He had to make sure that the lumber arrived soon enough for Apple Corps to frame the walls before the plumber's, electrician's, and insulator's promised arrivals. He remembered to call the building inspector, who would insist on seeing the place before the sheetrock went up. You build a job out of a host of promises, and if the electrician gets the flu, the whole procedure can collapse. You might have to tell the sheetrockers to delay a week and then you might lose them for a month. Timing is everything, and the job has not halted or even slowed for lack of the right materials or the next subcontractor. That is thanks to Jim's forethought—both his choices of subs and his scheduling. In this sense the house really exists in the meticulously printed notes he carries in his leather case. The plan in there is sound. Mechanically this job has gone more smoothly than most construction projects. Jim could congratulate himself for that, as Jonathan and Judith have, but he doesn't seem to be able to find much comfort there.

He has never known a job that aroused such complicated feelings in him. The electrician's bill arrives. It comes to \$780 more than the estimate. No one is to blame, Jim thinks, but the Souweines certainly have some cause to balk at paying this overrun. "Here we go again," Jim says when he makes up the change order. But Jonathan does

not argue. In fact, he says cheerfully that he will pay the extra charges in full. Jim goes deadpan. "Okay," he says. He actually seems slightly annoyed at Jonathan's largesse.

Jim has a long, exacting memory, especially for his own miscalculations. Sometimes he looks around the house and nearly every piece of it looks like a reproach to him. Then he speaks as if the job has gone so far off course already that no matter what happens from now on, he will be unable to salvage any satisfaction from the work he's done. The act of saying so often cheers him up.

Nearly every day Jim talks about success. His ruminations have a tentative quality. Will he feel successful if they make their hoped-for profit? Will they make any profit? He has resolved to hold the line and charge the Souweines for every change, no matter how mean and small-minded the act will make him feel. Then, in the natural course of the job, an issue such as the windowsills arises.

The specs say nothing about windowsills. The contract would allow Apple Corps to surround all the windows with stock Colonial casings as if the windows were pictures—to "picture-frame" the windows and leave them without sills. It's a fairly common practice, which saves a builder time. That's what Jim plans to do. This is a contract job. He assigns the task to Ned, the cabinetmaker. When the time for giving Ned his instructions comes, however, Jim can't bear the thought of their leaving a house without windowsills, and he does not want to ask Ned, of all people, to do a job wrong on purpose. Jim doesn't ask the Souweines' permission, perhaps because he fears permission won't be granted, and anyway, how can you agree to build a house for someone and then not give them windowsills to rest their chins and elbows on? So Jim tells Ned to make sills. He does not even ask for recompense. Evidently, he doesn't get much pleasure from the gesture either.

On his next visit, walking through the rooms, Bill notices the sills right away. He sees what Apple Corps has done. He finds Ned and Jim in the living room. He thanks them. "Got to please the architect, right?" Ned says. "No, I'm glad you're pleased."

To Jim, Bill says, "It has mostly to do with taking extra care. That's the nature of quality work."

"Or of not being businesslike," Jim says. He adds, "This contract's wide open. There are fifty places where we could've stuck it to them."

"Oh, I'm sure," Bill says. "That's the nature of . . . Well, I'm sure."

Ned laughs. His shoulders shake. "We don't know how."

"Maybe we should take a couple of years off," Jim says to Ned. "Go work for some honcho condo builder and get back to where there's some compromise."

Whether or not they are making money, they have to build this house. The financial side of the job has become immensely complex, a labyrinth of bills they haven't received and ones they haven't paid and ones they haven't yet incurred. Late in July, Jim decides to take Richard's advice and give up trying to compare their real progress

with their estimate. He will let Alex keep track of the accounts paid and received and stop worrying about the rest. By the second week of August, Jim admits, he feels much better. He still thinks about money. The issue is always there, he says, but for the time being it sits more lightly on him than it did when he believed he could control it.

THE FIRST MOUSE is sighted in the basement, by the plumber. The house has rooms, windows, a hearth, some plumbing, exterior doors, electricity, and heat. It still has plywood floors, which now look old and worn. Odors of mortar and special glues come and go. The house always contains the smell of wood and faint, sweetish smells of sweat.

Once the carpenters had framed the walls inside the house and the electrician and plumber had woven the miles, literally miles in all, of wire and pipes into the skeleton, like so many nerves and arteries and intestines, the insulator came and Jim said, "The house will change today." By nightfall it was all muffled up in pink and yellow fiber glass, and loud sounds no longer echoed. That was the calm before the sheetrockers. The carpenters, the plumber, the electrician, the insulator, had all seemed to work quickly. Finishing in three weeks a job that looked like it would take months, the sheetrockers showed what quickness meant.

When Jules saw the sheetrockers pile out of their cars and van, and troop across the sandy ground up onto the new porch, he said, "It looks like the Nicaraguan invasion."

"He's an incredible worker," Richard said, stopping to watch, through a downstairs window, one of the bosses, a muscular young man named Dave Pogue.

Cutting and running, as he himself described his technique, Pogue trotted through the house, slapping huge, heavy gray rectangles of sheetrock against the studs, cutting holes for outlets, screwing the sheetrock in place with an electric drill that—along with the several others constantly running—made the house sound like a giant dentist's office. Through the windows the sheetrockers really looked like people working at the wrong speed. They came and went like a swarm and left behind a maze of gray walls with many smooth white seams that would vanish altogether under the first coat of paint.

The carpenters went outside to work when the sheetrockers arrived. A few weeks later, around the time when the sheetrockers left, Apple Corps finished the exterior. Ned put in the last of the southern windows. Alex and Richard finished clapboarding the house. And Jim endowed it with a front door. He built a Greek Revival molding for the entryway from scratch, following Bill's drawing. He did so without uttering a single complaint about architects.

Near the end of August, during a coffee break out on the porch—those intervals in which they satisfy what Jim has called their "unrelenting quest for sugar"—Alex produces a list of figures: So far they've worked 2,441½ hours. They've billed the Souweines \$104,715. "We paid all our

bills, paid off our debt, and we're just about even," Alex says. He figures they should make some \$13,000 profit, on top of the \$14 an hour each has been making.

THE EXPENSE OF FRAMING and sheathing and roofing lies mostly in materials. Afterward, little by little, increasing amounts of labor are applied to dwindling amounts of new wood and nails. Now the time of swift, dramatic changes in the house has passed. At the start they used hundred-foot-long tapes, then ones twenty-four and sixteen feet long. Now they carry six-foot folding rules. These are long enough to measure what is left to do. Their fields of vision are narrowed, and their rulers, which they can use more accurately than tapes, are magnifying glasses for them.

The carpenters begin to populate the bare rooms of the house with visions of the life in them to come. They foresee parties in the living room, mornings in the kitchen. "I don't know if these people will sit on this porch or not," Richard says. "They run pretty wide open." Looking at the porch, he imagines Jonathan and Judith, gone gray, sitting there in rockers. Jim observes that the staircase is going to be fairly steep. "It'll get Jonathan upstairs fast," he says. "Jonathan's stair comes down into Judith's foyer," he remarks, adding, "A foyer's fancy. Just having one is fancy." As Jim begins to build the staircase, he imagines Judith descending it in a party dress, and he smiles. When the upstairs bathtub is plumbed, Jim fills it, opens the drain, and runs down to the living room to listen for gurgles. "Not too bad. They can't object too much. A house *lives*."

Jim stands outside on the sandy ground and looks over Judith's shoulder at a catalogue of bathroom fixtures. He advises. She selects soap dishes, holders for toilet paper, bars for towels, a hook for Jonathan's bathrobe. She turns and looks at Jim. "It's so weird. Discussing these intimate details of my life. Where my husband hangs his bathrobe."

"Yeah," Jim says. "And you already admitted you like to sit in the bathroom and watch Jonathan shave."

She smiles wryly. There's sudden color in Jim's cheeks.

Alone one gray morning in the basement, Jim finds a castle on the floor, built of scraps and sawdust. "Cute." He steps carefully around it, moving on. And later, working on the stairs, Jim thinks of children on them and puts lots of screws into the newel posts. He anchors the posts to the framing stoutly enough for juvenile traffic. He slaps a post when done. It does not waver. "Strong like bull."

THERE ARE TWO CATEGORIES of finish work inside the house. One is repetitious and fairly easy to perform. The carpenters must install dozens of window casings, nail in hundreds of lineal feet of baseboards ("Baseboards are the low point of the finish work, if you'll pardon the pun," Jim says), plug in a truckload of doors, lay some 1,500 square feet of oak flooring. They divide these chores. Jim takes the doors. Alex lays the oak floor. "It makes the time go by quickly. You keep busy. No thinking," he says. Alex willingly takes on the repetitive tasks that make up one category of finish work, but he also wants his share of the sec-

ond category: he has asked Jim to assign him the TV cabinet and the woodlift (a dumbwaiter to transport wood from basement to hearth). The woodlift is an especially demanding job that combines mechanic's work with cabinetmaking.

Only small piles of wood lie in the corners now. They dwindle slowly. Richard has the kitchen, a task of great complexity. He's making all the cabinets from scratch. "If I had to do one thing all the time, I could probably do kitchens," Richard says. He's making a lot of this kitchen from rough-cut boards of poplar that he planes and joints

won't take more than a week, however, and then, Ned fears, it's the baseboard beat for him. Making steps is a fine job. Ned wishes he could make it last.

"It's like geography," Jim says. "The interesting parts are the edges. Where things come together. The middle parts that are all the same are not so interesting to me." The main staircase will have dozens of edges and joints, all out in plain sight. Once, Jim was ready to give the staircase to a subcontractor. Now he has claimed it for himself, and he feels a little selfish.

In stair-building, the steeper a stair, the taller the risers



at a friend's woodworking shop in Apple Valley. Richard now divides his time between the hills and Amherst, but when he's away the others do not seem to miss him as much as they would if each did not have something special to build.

Ned has three sets of living-room steps. He builds the treads himself, gluing together long, thick boards of red oak. "Oak. It's really nice working with oak. I love this winy, uriney smell it has. *Piss oak.*" When he has made the oak floor of the foyer turn seamlessly into the first tread of one set of stairs, Ned stops to say, "I love this sea of oak in this living room. An Oriental carpet, some contemporary furniture. Anything would look good in *here.*" The stairs

between treads and the narrower the treads. All the books, including the handbook Richard pored over in trade school, prescribe that the width of one tread and the height of one riser should add up to seventeen or eighteen inches. The collective, successively refined wisdom of the tribe of carpenters seems to have produced that formula. It is the one that works best for the largest variety of human feet. A more basic rule for stairs says: Every tread must be as wide as every other, and every riser must be as tall as every other. It is very easy, a common mistake, for a builder of stairs to forget to add to his calculations the three-quarter-inch thickness of a finish floor that's not installed yet. Then he builds the stairs and lays the floor, and suddenly

he has a staircase with a bottom riser that is three quarters of an inch shorter than all the other risers. A stair like that will never stop tripping people, even those who know its flaw. Stair-making carpenters are like school crossing guards or trainers of seeing-eye dogs. They take on one of society's small sacred trusts.

The carpenters kneel on the floors of different rooms. Harpsichord music emanates from Jim's radio. Hammers ring now and then. Fine-toothed finish handsaws rasp away, making a sound like the music of the nighttime summer woods. First thing in the morning the house usually has a sylvan stillness, while the carpenters settle into their work.

Summer lingers in September. In the kitchen Richard's router whines. "Why, that boy is makin' the most piteous wailin' and caterwaulin' you ever did hear," Jim says. On his radio an old English ballad plays. Jim applies a delicate sliver of wood to the outer wall of the staircase. Now, after weeks of labor, he is done. And really, Jim has to admit, it's a pretty good-looking stair.

The day the carpenters begin to sand the floors, Richard's voice is merry. It's hard to do floor sanding well. You can easily make a floor ripple—enough, Jim says, to make a person seasick. And with the floors they return briefly to communal labor. "Glory work," Richard says.

The strips of red-oak flooring have a mottled grain, which has lain hidden in the grime. Now, as they pad around in stocking feet with brushes and buckets, applying coats of polyurethane, it is as if they were performing some trick for recovering disappearing ink. The grain emerges everywhere, its colors deep and radiant, the beauty underneath the bark of solemn oaks transported to a house.

Around the time when the first frost comes to Apple Valley, closing out Ned's and Richard's gardens, a man who lays carpet arrives at the house to cover the bedroom floors. The oak floor's last coat of polyurethane is still a little tacky, and the carpet man, pausing at the threshold of the foyer, says, "They don't have the heat on in here. That's why they're having problems with the floor."

Ned, in his socks, comes right out of the kitchen at these words. "Problems with the floor?" he says. His eyes are very wide, his chest quite high. "What problems? We don't have any problems with the floor."

"Okay, okay," the carpet man says, taking half a step back from Ned. "You're the general."

Ned returns to the kitchen, shaking his head all the way. He says to Jim, "Funny how reluctant I feel to share the house with anyone. So when a stranger comes in, mouth-ing off . . . I'm ready to give this house to the Souweines—I guess."

"I heard from a completely independent source that Jonathan is happy with this house," Jim says.

"Only that?" Ned says.

"What you want, boy?" Jim says. "You're gettin' paid."

"Well, jeez!" Ned says. "This house is the jewel of Amherst."

NED NEEDS TO MOVE an old bathtub, to get his own house ready for renters. He is moving to South Carolina in a few weeks, perhaps for a year, perhaps permanently. Apple Corps needs to discuss their future and also the end of this job. So they gather one night in September at Ned's house. Two weeks, Jim says he figures. Richard and Ned can start the next job in a week. He and Alex can finish up. They all agree that they can make their deadline easily. "Okay," Jim says. "The hell with the Souweine job."

"I think we're doin' okay," Richard says. "I think it held together real well."

Ned lies on the floor. "Yeah. A vote of appreciation from down here."

"I think you did *real* well, Jim," Richard says.

Alex nods assent.

"I feel better than I did," Jim says. Abruptly he rises and turns to fetch a beer. His face has deeply reddened. Back turned for a moment, he asks, and his voice quavers slightly, "What's the state of the economy, Alex?"

Alex reads some figures. He asks Jim, "What do you figure? How are we doing?"

"I stopped keeping track in July," Jim says, returning to the circle with his old color back. "It made me sick."

"I think we're going to make some money," Alex says. "About ten thousand dollars. Maybe."

Jim asks them about the party that the Souweines have proposed for the middle of a weekday. Jim says, "Thing I don't like is saying, 'Oh, everything's all right now,' because I don't feel that way. But I don't want to antagonize them."

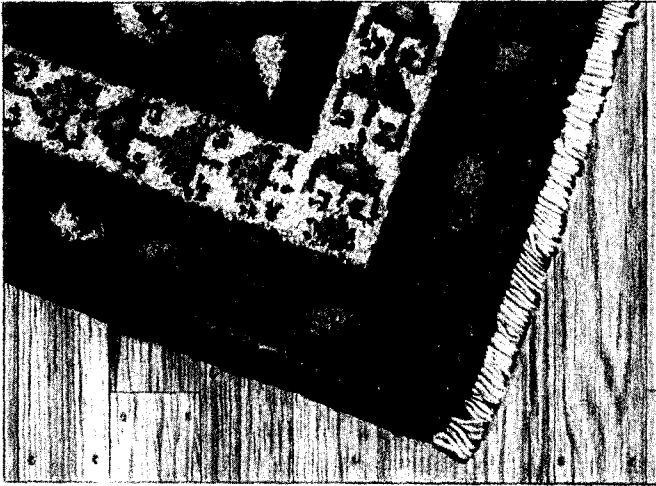
"I've been on jobs where it felt real bad to leave," Richard says.

Richard and Alex have a short contest. Alex names bad jobs they've known. Richard names good ones. "Right," Richard concludes. "There's good and bad ones."

Over the next few days Jim canvasses everyone, his partners and all the subs. Finally, Jim has to tell Judith that she's chosen the wrong time of day for the party. In a busy season like this one, no one wants to take hours off from work. Perhaps another time, they say to each other, but Jim feels sure there won't be a party. There almost never is.

He is pleased about the construction scheduling. They will beat the deadline. They can make a relaxed withdrawal. Clearly, he did some things right, or that would not be about to happen.

At a bar in Northampton, after work, Jim goes over the last change orders, trying to tie up loose ends for a last meeting with Jonathan. He wonders if he should exaggerate the costs of some of those changes, in order to gain leverage for bargaining. He shrugs. "I don't have a strategy. I'm just doing it for what it cost us." The endeavor takes Jim back through all of his old yellow pads. His attention wanders. "I've really been thinking about the issue of the art versus income," he says. "I guess I realized this summer that I'm not willing to trade it. The art."



IT'S MOVING DAY, OCTOBER 20, AND JONATHAN, IN THE cab of Jules's pickup and in the rooms of his old and new houses, is thinking about the meaning of things.

Jim loads tools into his pickup. He has worked at the house all day. While Jonathan fetched boxes from Pelham and Judith unpacked them in Amherst and Jules wallpapered the upstairs bathroom, Jim finished dozens of last little chores—hooked up the kitchen stove, planed a few edges of doors. He has worked hard to make the place inhabitable. He's finished his work now, but he isn't ready to leave.

Jim wanted to settle the final change orders today—for "symbolic" reasons, he said to Jonathan this morning. Jim imagined a ceremonial exchange—the Souweines would pay the bill; he'd turn over the house. But Jonathan hasn't studied the change orders yet, and Jim has agreed to put off the issue of money until the following week.

Jim catches Judith and Jonathan in midflight. They have a great deal to do before bed, and now Jonathan heads upstairs, to begin arranging new rooms. Judith remains in the kitchen, unpacking boxes of plates and food.

Jim leans against a counter, as if this were a coffee break. "I'm not sure if I want to let you have the place or not," he says to her, the quaver of a small laugh in his voice. "I like it."

She looks up from a box and smiles at him. "You can come anytime. You don't even have to call."

Jim drinks down the beer Jonathan gave him. He walks toward the front door. He calls up the stairs, "Jonathan, if I don't catch you tomorrow, I'll catch you Monday. Good luck on your first night, if I don't catch you tomorrow."

Jonathan appears at the top of the stairs. "Thanks a lot. And thanks a lot for doing everything that had to be done for us to move in."

"You're welcome," Jim says.

Half an hour later, in his own kitchen, Jim says, "I wanted to hang around to see if anything would happen. It's funny. Every time Jonathan says you've been doing a good job, it's always in the context of some negotiation or some favor. It's not that I don't believe him, but it's always sort of

tinged. I don't feel closure. I assume it will come. It doesn't always."

YESTERDAY JONATHAN AND JUDITH began to prepare their new house. Today, Friday, they'll begin to live in it. Judith's face is bright. She's like a tourist in some long-imagined country. Everywhere she looks she sees something that delights her. How thoroughly, for instance, sunlight penetrates the breakfast nook—she'd never fully realized this before. From the kitchen all morning come her cries of glee: "Oh, the rug is here!" and "It's the phone company!" (The young man who comes to hook up the phones says musingly that the house looks like an old farmhouse. "Oh, you said just the right thing!" Judith says. Later she'll offer him lunch.) The morning wears on. Two orange moving vans—THE CAREFUL MOVER, say the signs on them—pull up outside. Four men in coveralls come in and out, two by two, a man on either end of the heavy and bulky stuff that they lug down the ramps, out of the van, and in through the front door.

The movers place the couch here, then there, as Judith ponders, directs, and redirects. Under a cushion she finds some children's things. "Look at all the goodies. Want some crayons?" she asks the men, who grin and laugh. She sits. "This is great," she says, to herself. "As my father says, who needs money?" She looks around her, at the chairs, at the Oriental rug, at the wood stove on the hearth, and she pats the cushions beside her. "This is a *great* room. I must call my friend William Rawn and tell him he done good."

Judith and Jonathan pause for lunch and a little eclectic rumination. It's that kind of day.

"Jim seemed a little down," Jonathan says. "Maybe he doesn't want to leave."

"Jim was upset, I think," Judith says. "He didn't know how to say good-bye. He's so shy. It is strange. He's sad and we're very happy."

Across the river in Northampton, Jim and Sandy have finished dinner, and Jim has decided that Jonathan won't call, when the phone rings. It's Jonathan thanking him. Jonathan says that everywhere he looks he sees things a person could not reasonably expect to have in his house until he had lived in it twenty years. Then Judith's voice is in Jim's ear, thanking him lavishly. He knows Judith far better and he likes her more than he does Jonathan now, but it's Jonathan's plain and unmixed thanks that count for Jim. He has tears in his eyes when he hangs up.

"It was nice," Jim says the next day. "They still haven't paid," he adds.

FOR JUDITH, LIVING IN her new house is like a treasure hunt. She keeps finding acts of genius in the design, and she calls Bill Rawn often to report her discoveries. She invites him to spend a night in his creation, and he accepts with alacrity.

Bill spends an evening and the following morning watching the Souweines use the house, and he feels, as he

puts it later, "thankful." The long sessions of planning and the decisions that came from them and the interpretations of those decisions that he made at his drawing board all are collected in the way the house manages the bustle of a weekday morning. There are no traffic jams. Morning light really does stream in, just as he dreamed it would.

When the Souweines and their children leave for work and school, Bill stays behind. He wanders through the rooms. He gazes out windows. Bill looks around the kitchen. He must call Richard and thank him for this beautiful cabinet work, he really must, Bill says, and as it happens he will. (And Richard will say after that call, "Yeah, I'd like to work with him again. I learned a lot.")

Trying out the house, he stores up memories of a few decisions that seem to him less than ideal, of ones that seem just right, and of ones that seem lucky. Months before, he had decided to make the breakfast nook ten and a half feet by thirteen feet and he had worried ever since that it would be too small. Now he sits down at the table in the nook and he sees that the space is large enough. He takes up a measuring tape and measures the nook one last time.

"I'm sure that some of the Souweine drawings will become a standard for me on the next house," he says. His tape measure snaps back into its case. "Now I understand what ten-feet-six by thirteen is," Bill says.

IN THE COURSE OF A CONSTRUCTION PROJECT, power often shifts among client, architect, and builder. Often it does so in unpredictable ways, until the end. In the end, power reverts to all but the most careless of clients. If you pay a builder in full before he's finished the job, it may be a long time before you see him again, and stories of such abandonment are legion. Every builder, meanwhile, knows stories of clients who never paid the last bill, not because of real faults in the job, just to save money. But whatever the merits of a given case, when the client withholds the last payment, the builder can't hope to get that money without spending some, often about as much as the last bill itself.

"I know all the tricks," Jules says privately some days after the last change-order meeting. "Jim couldn't win. Jonathan holds back fifteen thousand dollars. 'Sue me.' They get a lawyer. He calls Jonathan's lawyer, which would've been me. Their lawyer says, Let's settle this thing. If it went to court, the judge would order a settlement. That's the way the world works. If I were an SOB, I'd have told Jonathan to give them nothing. But that was not the spirit of the job."

There is a lot of sorting out still to do, and on the morning before the meeting, Jules tells Jonathan not to pay any of the last bill until he and Apple Corps have settled the whole. Jonathan does not take the advice. In his office Jonathan writes out a check for the part of his debt that he doesn't question. It's for \$6,000. The costs of the other, questionable items amount to only a third of that.

Jonathan does not hand over the check at the beginning of negotiations. He gives it to Jim midway through, when a compromise on the other issues is in the air. Jonathan does not withhold that uncontested payment. He does employ it, but gently, it seems.

As for Jim, he has done some tactical thinking. He owes Jonathan a credit on the shingles, which are of a less expensive grade than Jim had specified. Jim comes to the meeting resolved not to mention the subject. If Jonathan has forgotten, Jim will forget. But when Jonathan mentions the shingles, Jim concedes the debt at once. The living room will see cozier scenes, but a rough symmetry governs these proceedings.

All of Apple Corps sits in the living room. Jonathan, and Judith, who joins them midway, take the couch. Jules sits on one of Ned's little stairs, on the sidelines. Richard fiddles with the brim of a new hat. Sometimes he sighs. Ned arises to pace. Alex rests his forehead on the heel of a hand, studying puzzling figures. Jim wets his lips. He says to Jonathan, "I've got a general issue. What happens with this procedure each time . . . Let's see. When a situation comes up and we make a mistake, we eat it, but when it comes out less, in theory we make money, but . . ." Jim stops again, re-wets his lips. "I don't know what I'm getting into. It just seems like it's a ratchet. It goes only one way." He tries again. "I'm not trying to collect. It's just a way I feel. It seems like . . . Maybe I can't say anything."

Jonathan leans forward, toward Jim. "I want to say something that might make you feel better. I want you to listen carefully, because I don't want you to misunderstand me or get angry. There have been many, many times throughout the process when you looked at something as an extra and I didn't. But if your feeling is that it's all going one way, I think sometimes it went the other way. I'm not saying you did anything wrong by any means, but maybe that will make you feel better."

Apple Corps has a list. Jonathan has a list. They cannot agree about the stairs. Jonathan calls the staircase the one part of the house that does not please him. Mainly, he says, the railing is too low for safety. Several other items stand between them. These make for a thicket of numbers.

"And you won't listen to me, even though I have more gray hair than anybody," Jules says from the corner.

Everyone laughs. Eventually, they do listen. The whole argument boils down to \$2,000, Jules points out. Apple Corps thinks Jonathan owes them \$1,500, most of it on the staircase; Jonathan believes he owes nothing but on the contrary is owed \$500.

Jonathan should surrender his claim of \$500. Apple Corps should give up \$500 of theirs. That would leave \$1000 in dispute, which they could split, Jonathan paying \$500. Each side, in effect, gives up \$1000.

"I'm willing to do that," Jonathan says. "Because if I don't, then we won't resolve the stairs and there will be bad feelings."

Apple Corps asks for time and privacy. Jules, Jonathan, and Judith leave the room. The carpenters stand in a circle by the hearth.

"It's hard, but I think we just ought to do it," Ned says.

"Okay with me," Richard says. "Come down here four or five more times and it'll cost us five hundred dollars." Richard turns to Jim. "I love the stairs. They're the prettiest stairs."

Jim purses his lips. Then he says. "It makes me think of what happened in the beginning and of the two hundred dollars we gave them for Rawn."

"You can't go back over all that," Richard says.

"I guess you can't. If we do this, I just make some calls and it's all over."

"I'd say let's just do it," Richard declares.

"You agree, Alex?" Jim asks.

"Yup."

"Smile a little?"

"Nope. I don't have to do that."

Champagne is opened and poured ("The ceiling's not guaranteed against corks," Jim says), and Jonathan raises his glass to the carpenters. "I want to make a toast to you." It reads a little like a list. It's delivered with vigor and unmistakable feeling: "You're a very nice bunch of guys. You built a beautiful house. I'm very glad we got this resolved today. And, I hate to say it, but Jules was probably helpful. And I am proud that I live in this house and that you built it, and I will tell everybody about that." He shakes hands with each of the carpenters, and when he reaches Alex, saying, "I love this house and I like you guys," Alex does smile after all.

"Thanks, Jonathan."

The familiar winnowing follows. Jonathan has a client whose interests need defending. He leaves at once. Alex, Richard, and Ned have suppers waiting. They move toward the door.

"This is not good-bye?" Judith says to them.

Ned grins. "Good-bye. Enjoy your house."

"We love our house," she says.

Jim remains behind a while. To Judith he says, "It was good to have a third party. Even this third party." He nods at Jules.

"I did not talk against you, Jim," Jules says.

"No. I know."

"So what have you guys got lined up?" Judith asks.

"Ned's going to South Carolina and Alex will be away this winter. Richard and I have a lot of inside jobs."

"So you and Richard are the winter crew, eh?" she asks.

"We have jobs for most of next summer, too."

"Aren't you selling yourselves short, working for time and materials?" Jules asks.

"Well, it's just so we don't have to do this," Jim says, beckoning at the scene of difficult and just completed negotiations.

"You won't make any money," Jules says.

Jim barks a laugh, rather like Ned's. "We didn't make any money on this!"

Jules grins. He winks. "Then you're stupid. If you couldn't rip *these* people off."

Jim grins at Judith. "Too bad he lives nearby. You can't tell him to just go home." The moment he says it, Jim feels he has overstepped his bounds, but Judith changes the subject gracefully, still smiling. Jim gets his leather case, also his lunchbox and jacket, and, chatting pleasantly with Jules, thanking Jules for his help, departs.

"SO WE ONLY MADE three thousand dollars. But, pretty safe to say, we didn't make money on any other job this year."

This summer, from the Souweine job, the carpenters have earned better wages than ever before, but most of the profit they hoped for has evaporated. They have just dined together on pizza and wine. Now they sit with account books and calculators before them, at Alex's table. Outside, frost is gathering on windshields. Warmth swells from Alex's wood stove. Jim has taken off his wool shirt. He wears a white T-shirt. His eyes have red rims.

"Then where we really screwed up was our labor," Richard says. "How come we ended the job on time?"

"Because we put in so much at the beginning."

"Yeah, big weeks."

"How many days we put into it all?" Richard asks.

"We put in four hundred twenty-three days," Ned says.

Alex laughs.

"Oh," Richard says. "Now it's all making sense." He laughs. "What are we laughing for?"

"Well, it had to be in labor," Jim says. "Especially in the finish work."

"So we should've estimated our labor at what?"

"A third more."

"I remember thinking, 'Uh-oh, here comes the finish work,' when we finished the framing, because usually we're ahead by then," Richard says. "We built it, though, at fifty dollars a square foot. By God."

"Why didn't we lose our ass?" Alex asks.

"Because we were supposed to make fifteen thousand, plus five percent on materials," Jim says. He makes a face.

"Yeah," Alex says. "We could've gone away with a lot of money in our pockets."

"If we knew what we were doing," Jim says. "This is depressing. Got any liquor?"

"We blew it out on the finish work," Richard says.

"Always do," Ned says.

They've gone back and forth through the numbers. Subcontractors and materials came out fine. The items they'd forgotten to estimate were expensive, but some mistakes and underestimates are inevitable in a job, and those were roughly canceled out by the various overestimates they'd made. They spent most of their hoped-for profit on their own labor—that is to say, on building just so. They spent their profit on themselves, and they know it. Ned finds a bottle of whiskey under Alex's desk and shoves it toward Jim. Alex has some more figures to report. On this job they drove the following miles, he tells them: Richard drove 1,700; Ned, 2,687; Alex, 945; Jim, 1,870.

Alex has computed the ratio of miles driven to hours worked. "Jim is the most efficient of the crew."

"It's not gonna do me any good. We didn't make any money."

"Hey, you made your wages, man," Ned says.

"That's not enough." Jim stands, takes a shot of whiskey, sits down, and says, "Depressing. I wouldn't mind, but that you beat your brains out . . ."

"Okay! Let's leave fifty dollars in the account. Split up the rest. Susan's job is doin' real well." ("Susan's job" is the one they are working on now.)

Ned laughs.

"A little upbeat," Richard goes on. "Jim had the most hours by far."

"Yeah. For nothing," Jim says.

"Oh, come on!" Ned says. "We got to give ourselves some credit."

"We put a lot into it and didn't get much out of it," Jim says.

Ned glares at Jim. "The things I got out of it through *you* are going to be significant, and there'll be a long-term pay-back," he says, and you might think he is threatening Jim—cheer up, Jim, or else.

"Look at it this way, too," Richard says. "We made three thousand dollars on that house. I don't know how much you *should* make on a house like that."

"I figured ten percent would take care of it," Jim says.

"And ten percent is not a lot, I agree," Ned says. "Not for custom builders of stature."

"Add the four of us up and you have quite a stature," Jim says. He laughs for the first time.

"Maybe we need someone to kick some business into us," Ned says.

Jim looks around the table. He says, "I realized this summer that I don't want to compromise work for money."

"We don't want to do it cobby," Richard says.

"We *can't* do it cobby," Jim says. He looks glum again.

"So, in that mode," Ned says, "we're gonna have to . . ."

"Charge more."

"Charge more."

Alex looks scholarly in glasses this evening. "But each of us made two hundred and forty dollars a month more than we did last year," he says, consulting the books.

"I'm just depressed," Jim says.

They divide the spoils. Richard plans to drive in convoy with Ned to South Carolina, a few weeks from now. He'll transport Ned's woodworking tools in his pickup. "Well, I got new tires," Richard says. "Truck's all tuned up. Wish I'd gotten it painted. Oh, well."

They talk about changes to come, about becoming employers themselves. They wonder who they might hire. Richard thinks they should hire inexperienced carpenters.

"Because we're sure to know more than they do," Jim says, and there's a ripple of laughter in his voice.

Richard makes a high, loud laugh. "That's what I was thinking!"

Jim says, "I remember guys, when I was first learning,

guys who lorded it over you because they knew how to sweep a floor: 'You kids all think you know how to sweep floors.'" Jim turns to Ned and says he hopes Ned will return. Ned's place in the partnership will be waiting for him if he does.

"Well," Ned says, "I fully intend to stay in touch with you guys, and I'd appreciate the same. As things go on."

"As money is lost," Richard says.

"As we screw up jobs," Jim says. "Help, we're in court."

"Please send money," Alex says.

Richard cackles. "Please send money."

"It's ALWAYS THE SAME," Jim says. "When you're done, the work's gone and you focus on money. That's when you think, They have a house and you don't have very much to show for it." He thinks that he has probably served the hardest part of his apprenticeship in business. He also says he knows now that he loves this work that never ends and always changes. "It *is* a great job."

"Jules saved us in the end," Ned says. "He allowed me to go away feeling all right. What I love most about this job, you leave one place and go on to the next, and it's all gone, really, the tension and anxiety. I love that cycle."

Susan's job, as Richard calls it, has progressed to step-ladder height when Jim rejoins his partners full-time on Halloween, just soon enough to help them raise a huge hemlock beam, the main carrying beam for the second floor of the addition they are building.

Richard is the boss of Susan's job, which is the last on which they will all work together for a long time to come. Ned is in high spirits this morning nevertheless. Discussing the Souweine job over coffee earlier, he said to Richard, "Good will at the end is worth some money. We *are* horrible businesspeople. But, by God, we can build a house!" They stand on stepladders now and on the top of the frame of the first-story walls—on thin, precarious perches.

"Jim's used to bein' in charge," Richard says to the others. "We got to put him back in his place."

Jim smiles. "It's great to have a boss," he says.

"Thing is, we never listened to you anyways," Richard says.

All is ready. The beam is cut and mortised. The posts to support it are erected. They hoist the beam with collective grunts. The posts accept the load. The timber slides into place, and the client, Susan, asks them to wait. A snapshot is in order. She rushes inside and returns with a camera. They are wearing their gunslinger's belts again, big hammers hanging from their hips. Richard wears a new pair of suspenders, which Alex told him to buy for the sake of modesty, for proper elevation of the pants. The camera is aimed. The builders of houses turn and grin from their perches. Richard Gougeon raises his framing hammer high over his head. "This is my best pose, right here," he explains. "When I'm swingin' my hammer." □



FIRST ENCOUNTERS

FELIX MENDELSSOHN AND VICTORIA R.

ONE HAD TO BE careful, Victoria and Albert agreed, about foreign musicians. Many of them drank and were involved with women. But this Mendelssohn was a gentleman and family man, always invited to the best houses when he came to England. At thirty-three he was only ten years older than themselves. They often sang duets from one of his song collections and had heard that he played magnificently; his Jewish ancestry seemed hardly to matter—really, not at all. When he played the organ at St. Paul's, all London went to listen. Albert played the organ too. Music was, Victoria said—after herself and the children, of course—his greatest love.

So Felix was invited to Buckingham Palace, after dinner, one June evening in 1842. Victoria and Albert were almost fluttery with anticipation. They accompanied the composer to the piano and listened with rapt attention as he played selections from his *Songs Without Words*. When he asked them for a theme to improvise upon, they enthusiastically offered two, and the Queen much admired his

rendition of the Austrian national anthem with the right hand and "Rule Britannia" with the left. "Really I have never heard anything so beautiful," she wrote in her diary, adding, "Poor Mendelssohn was quite exhausted when he had done playing."

Needless to say, he was asked back. Albert wanted Felix to try his organ, and Victoria wanted what Albert wanted, so there was Mendelssohn, on a Saturday afternoon, at Buckingham again. The Prince explained the organ registers and played a chorale. Felix followed with the chorus from *Saint Paul*, the three of them singing along and Albert pulling the stops. Next they trooped to the Queen's salon, where, at the piano, Victoria sang "Italian." Except that she sang D sharp where it should have been natural, Mendelssohn later reported, and natural where it should have been sharp, she performed "most charmingly." In fact, he said, "the only really nice, comfortable house in England, one where one feels completely at home, is Buckingham Palace."

—Nancy Caldwell Sorel

*A proposal to reform
the unemployment-compensation system*

GETTING OFF THE DOLE

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

THE TWO KEY LABOR-MARKET PHENOMENA OF THE 1980s are a high rate of overall unemployment and a rapid transition from declining to emerging industries. Today 8.4 million people are officially unemployed, and approximately two to three million more are out of work but too discouraged to look any longer. Since 1980 the manufacturing sector has lost 2.3 million jobs. Hundreds of thousands of well-paid factory workers have been displaced. At the other extreme of the labor market, young people who have dropped out of school cannot get jobs for want of basic skills. Emerging fields, many of which demand more-advanced skills, are often short of qualified workers. Yet today many economists believe that it has become difficult to use macroeconomic measures to drive unemployment below six or seven percent without setting off unacceptable inflation. At those levels of unemployment, income transfers for the jobless become prohibitively expensive for society. A labor-market system suited to the 1980s and 1990s would emphasize job creation and retraining, not the subsidy of idleness.

The principal mechanism that the United States has for relieving the pain of joblessness is an odd, unintended legacy of the New Deal: unemployment insurance, a program that celebrated its fiftieth birthday in August. In 1983, in the wake of the latest recession, state and federal governments spent \$31.5 billion to satisfy unemployment claims, in effect paying people not to work. At the same time, they spent about \$5 billion on a not-very-well-coordinated array of programs that provide training and wage subsidies in order to get idle workers back on the job.

Lately, many critics have looked longingly at the \$20-

to-\$30-billion pool of funds for unemployment compensation and wondered why it cannot be tapped to retrain jobless people for other work or to subsidize the creation of new jobs. In Sweden, the one Western nation that has stayed at virtually full employment since the Second World War, outlays directed at unemployment are about three times ours, relative to population, but 90 percent of that money goes to train people or to create jobs. In the United States between 80 and 90 percent of labor-market outlays goes for the subsistence of the involuntarily unemployed.

Seemingly, that priority in public outlays is just about the opposite of what most Americans want. Public-opinion polls have long shown that a clear majority of Americans think the government should not subsidize idleness but instead should make sure that everybody who wants a job can find one. How we got an employment-security system so at odds with society's professed values illustrates both why we need government and why we have such a hard time making it do what we want.

Only in the loosest sense can unemployment insurance, job placement, and job training be considered to make up an employment-security system. Unemployment insurance is effectively mandated by the federal government and operated by each state. It pays benefits averaging about 40 percent of take-home pay, typically for up to twenty-six weeks; the highest benefit at present is paid by the state of West Virginia, which gives an unemployed worker with no dependents as much as \$225 a week. To be eligible for unemployment insurance, a worker must be available for work and in most states must be actively looking for a job. Unemployment insurance is not needs-tested; it is offered as a matter of right



to any worker with sufficient work history.

Job placement is undertaken by the U.S. Employment Service and its state affiliates, which collect job listings and refer applicants to employers. In most states people drawing unemployment benefits must register with the service, but anybody may do so, and most of the people it places in jobs are not on unemployment.

The third, and newest, part of the employment-security system is a hodgepodge of federal, state, and local programs offering job training and retraining, vocational education, supported work, subsidized wages, and apprenticeship aid, most of which have little to do with unemployment insurance or the public Employment Service. To list some of these programs is to invite groans at the confusion and redundancy that plague federal initiatives: the Manpower Development and Training Act, the Vocational Education Act, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, the Concentrated Employment Program, Job Opportunities in the Business Sector, the Job Corps, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, New Careers, Operation Mainstream, the Comprehensive Work and Training Program, the Work Incentive Program, the Public Service Employment Program, and the much maligned Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which was revised in 1982 to become the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA). The JTPA is at least a good deal more flexible than the earlier job-training laws were. It gives local "private industry councils," working with state governors, wide latitude to design training programs. But because of the Reagan budget cuts, the JTPA provides less than half the funds that the programs of the 1970s offered. And the unemployment-compensation system, which consumes the overwhelming share of labor-market outlays, still operates largely as its own, independent preserve.

Unemployment insurance as designed in 1935 had a benefit period limited to sixteen weeks. It was intended only as a short-term bridge, to tide the worker over while he looked for other private employment or awaited recall from layoff. For the long-term unemployed the New Deal provided public-works jobs. But by the late 1930s "work relief" had fallen from favor. And except for a brief and unhappy revival under CETA in the late 1970s, public jobs have not been a substantial part of postwar labor-market



policy in the United States.

The 1935 program had two other peculiar features. It established a federal unemployment tax but allowed states to collect most of it if they created their own unemployment insurance, which every state soon did. President Franklin D. Roosevelt took this approach both because he feared that a direct federal program might be declared unconstitutional and because his southern allies wanted locally run programs that would not interfere with Jim Crow. Also, the tax was an odd one, which would ultimately frustrate attempts at reform. It was "experience-rated," meaning that an employer who regularly laid off workers had to pay a higher tax rate than one whose unemployment claims were infrequent. This supposedly deterred abuse and made unemployment insurance more

"market-like" and less of a government program.

But experience rating had an unintended side effect that made the program rigid. Fearing an increase in their payroll taxes, businesses have lobbied against using the unemployment trust fund in a more dynamic manner, to retrain idle workers or to subsidize re-employment. Thus, ironically, a program contrived to mollify conservative fears—no comprehensive tax, no socialistic public jobs, no race-mixing dictated from Washington—evolved into, of all things, a dole.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION CAN BE DEFENDED for several reasons besides the obvious humanitarian one. Most manpower economists conclude that short-term unemployment compensation is socially efficient, because it helps industries adjust their labor forces periodically without losing their pools of trained manpower. The auto industry finds it cost-effective to lay off workers during the annual August retooling and during cyclical slumps in demand for cars. The savings in labor costs more than offset the higher payroll taxes incurred under the experience-rating principle. Similarly, construction companies lay off workers every winter. Without unemployment insurance to tide these skilled workers over, many of them would be lost to other industries and the cost to business of training replacements would go up. In theory, unemployment insurance also makes economic sense because it gives displaced workers some time to search for jobs that

fit their skills. Society is compensated for the cost of subsidizing that search by the better matches between worker and job that result when a worker is not under pressure to take the first job available.

But the whole idea of unemployment compensation, while it may have some abstract efficiency benefits, rangles many employed taxpayers. Although until the 1960s the Employment Service enjoyed a fairly good reputation as a labor exchange, unemployment insurance has always been criticized. The system is very easy to cheat on. Unless the local employment office wishes to expend all its manpower on policing, it cannot possibly verify whether or not every claimant is sincerely looking for a job. In most states proprietors of incorporated small businesses who are nearing retirement age may go out of business and then collect unemployment until benefits expire. Many of us know highly qualified people who at some point in their working lives have chosen to take a vacation on unemployment compensation before moving on into a new job. In January of 1981 the Washington, D.C., unemployment office agreed to conduct business one Saturday morning solely for the purpose of processing the claims of several dozen Carter Administration staff members who had strong reason to suspect, on the basis of election returns the previous November, that they were about to be laid off from their jobs.

Most state unemployment-compensation laws are surprisingly lenient about what constitutes "suitable" employment. In most states a worker who has lost his job cannot be forced to take another job at a substantially lower wage or in a part of town that requires a long commute.

Until about five years ago the Labor Department maintained that the unemployment-insurance system had an overpayment rate of only one to two percent. But this estimate was based on internal audits that match unemployment-insurance claims against payroll taxes. In other words, it represented mainly cases of overt (and incautious) fraud, in which people collecting unemployment benefits were caught *in flagrante*, holding jobs at the same time.

More-systematic studies document what casual observers have long suspected—that overpayment rates are much higher and that many people drawing unemployment com-

pensation are not actively looking for work. In 1981 two economists at Arizona State University, Paul L. Burgess and Jerry L. Kingston, working under contract to the Labor Department, sampled case files in five states. By an elaborate process of cross-checking, they found that in two states upward of ten percent of all benefits dollars had been paid to claimants who were not really looking for work.

Although the employment-service part of the system arouses far less indignation than the unemployment-insurance part, it, too, is vulnerable to criticism. When it was established, in 1933, there were few reputable private employment agencies, and corporate personnel offices were rudimentary. Since its heyday, during the labor-short years of the Second World War, when the service filled most ci-



vilian jobs, its "penetration rate" has steadily declined, except in predominantly rural states, where it remains a principal employment exchange. Here again, numerous studies confirm what many people suspect: the vast majority of workers these days get jobs through referrals by friends, relatives, and neighbors, by applying directly to employers, and through want ads. One exhaustive survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 33.5 percent of all job applicants had some contact with a state employment service but only about five percent actually got their jobs through one. Moreover, most referrals by the public service are to jobs at the low end of the pay scale, with average wages of about \$4.50 an hour. One study, by the Stanford Research Institute, compared workers who got jobs through the Employment Service with a closely

matched control group who did not seek jobs there. Six months later the male workers placed by the service had earnings no higher than those workers in the control group who had found jobs. The female workers who were placed by the service, however, did significantly better than those who were not placed. The service is also disproportionately important for black workers, about ten percent of whom rely on it to find jobs.

Findings like these would seem to support one high-minded justification of the Employment Service—that it benefits the historically most deprived portion of the labor market. But few good jobs ever get listed with the Employment Service. And if no public agency existed, most job seekers would undoubtedly make their way to the pri-

vice of Management and Budget recalls, “that Congress and the White House were in a race to see who could write the supplemental-budget request first.” Although some portions of the service have suffered apparently permanent cutbacks under President Reagan, the service as a whole is once again gaining personnel.

IF THIS WERE A NEO-CONSERVATIVE TRACT OF THE SORT that has become familiar in the 1980s, the story would simply end here, with the conclusion that the present employment-security system is both a waste of money and an affront to the work ethic; that once again the public sector has been found to be wasteful, inefficient, and even destructive of its own professed goals; and that the discipline of market forces is the indicated remedy for unemployment.

But such conclusions are too glib, because the employment-security system, though deeply flawed, operates against a background of enormous, unmet need. Research suggests that in fact the majority of unemployed people truly want jobs. Yet the present system offers them subsidies not to work and then clumsily enforces an easily circumvented paper chase after jobs that often don't exist. More than ten million Americans, after all, are out of work. The fact that unemployment rates have fluctuated between seven and eleven percent in recent years suggests that joblessness is mainly a macroeconomic failure and



vate agencies and the want ads, which are now subject to affirmative-action laws.

The most vocal political constituency these days for a public employment service is the Employment Service itself. Some 22,800 people work in its 2,400 offices, in every congressional district in the country. Because the system is a state-run service paid for by a federal tax, it is understandably popular with state legislatures. The Interstate Conference of Employment Security Agencies is one of Washington's more adroit and well-connected lobbies. In 1981 President Reagan cut the Employment Service budget by an unprecedented 24 percent. This cut took effect in the second half of the fiscal year, which doubled its budgetary impact, and several thousand layoffs occurred. “The political outcry was so immense,” a source at the Of-

not the result of some inexplicable fluctuation in the work ethic. Millions of people were not slothful in the thirties and suddenly diligent in the forties.

Even the simple income-support system of unemployment insurance reaches an ever-diminishing percentage of the jobless. As recently as the late 1970s, 50 to 70 percent of the jobless received unemployment-insurance benefits. Because the unemployment rate leveled off at a higher plateau during the 1980s, many of the unemployed have been out of work for extended periods and have exhausted their benefits. By 1984 only 34 percent of the unemployed were receiving benefits in an average month, and the number was projected to drop below 30 percent after the expiration of supplemental federal benefits, last March. Thus, not only does the employment-security system fail

to put people back to work but it fails to provide income support to a majority of the unemployed.

Looking at the system as a whole, it seems painfully obvious that we are spending too much money on the wrong kinds of programs, and not even running them well. What makes this realization all the more painful is that experiments directed toward re-employment have been tried, on a significant scale, and have worked.

In the early 1970s the Ford Foundation came up with a plan for using welfare grants to subsidize re-employment. The idea was that recipients who wanted to get off welfare and into jobs could convert their welfare checks into training-and-wage subsidies during a transitional period. A series of local pilot projects, collectively known as the National Supported Work Demonstration, was created. In one such project, Transitional Employment Enterprises (TEE), which still operates in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the welfare check is diverted to pay the administrative costs of job training, counseling, remedial education, and expenses attendant on taking employment, such as child care and transportation. During the transitional phase the employer bears the cost of the client's salary. Once the transitional phase ends, typically after four to six months, the subsidy ends too, and most workers are off welfare. Since its inception TEE has placed some 6,000 welfare recipients in long-term jobs with such blue-chip employers as the Bank of Boston, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Wang, and Digital. Retention rates for former welfare recipients referred through the supported-work program are higher than for job applicants who come in off the street. Recently the state of Massachusetts adopted a program called Employment and Training Choices to encourage people receiving various forms of public assistance to opt for job training. In some cases, like TEE, welfare checks are actually converted into training dollars. ET Choices, however, does not tap unemployment-insurance funds.

The Supported Work Demonstration, which has been widely acclaimed, raises an obvious question: If the use of income supports as transitional training subsidies can work with a hard-core welfare population, why not use the same approach with workers drawing unemployment insurance, all of whom have work histories? If even half of the unem-



ployment-insurance dollars were available to subsidize work instead of idleness, millions of jobs could be created.

Another interesting experiment is taking place in California, where proponents of retraining were, in effect, able to peel away a portion of the unemployment tax for use in more dynamic ways. Blessed with an unintended surplus in the unemployment-insurance trust fund, Governor Jerry Brown's administration lowered the standard unemployment-insurance payroll tax by one-tenth of one percent and then levied a separate tax of an equivalent amount to fund a new agency, the Employment and Training Panel. The panel uses its annual budget of \$55 million to subsidize retraining programs both for jobless workers who

have exhausted their benefits and for workers whose jobs are about to be lost because of technological change. Employers are committed to provide a job at the end of the training.

In one panel project, machinists at six aerospace companies are being given a twelve-week course in how to operate new, computer-controlled machining centers. A trailer that serves as a mobile classroom and contains several state-of-the-art machine tools is hauled right into the company parking lot. The training is conducted by teachers from the Los Angeles Community College District, under contract to the state panel. According to officials of Rockwell International, one of the participating employers, without this program some of Rockwell's manual machinists would have been laid off. Other employees would have used the new, "numerically controlled" machining technology anyway, but they would have used it as machine operators. The training teaches them how to operate the machining centers as programmers, too.

So far, in its first two years of operation the panel has enrolled some 41,700 workers. Eighty-seven percent of those who have completed training have been placed in jobs, paying an average of \$7.82 an hour. According to Steven Duscha, the panel's director, "Training has always been a very low priority for corporations. By subsidizing it, we encourage companies to become more systematic about it and to upgrade the quality of their work force." California is one of only two states (the other is Delaware) that have managed, directly or indirectly, to divert a small portion of current unemployment-compensation monies

into job-training and wage subsidies. California's program is run by an agency independent of the state employment service, the Employment Development Department (EDD). "If we relied on EDD to refer people to our program," says someone who works with the panel, "we'd have never started a class."

In 1983 a third experiment began, in Minnesota, where more than 100,000 of the unemployed have used up their benefits or are ineligible. A total of \$100 million was appropriated over two years to subsidize directly the creation of public- and private-sector jobs. The Minnesota Emergency Employment Development program, or MEED, gives employers up to five dollars an hour (four dollars for wages, another dollar for fringe benefits) for a maximum of six months for every new job they create, subject only to the provisos that they increase their total number of jobs and hire workers not receiving unemployment benefits. In its first two years MEED subsidized 27,720 new jobs; the program is expected to return \$37.1 million to the state through reduced welfare costs and increased tax receipts for that period. MEED, too, operates outside the usual Employment Service channels, although in some locales it uses the Employment Service as a placement office.

These experiments remain the exception, because there is immense resistance to tapping the large pool of unemployment-insurance dollars. Employers fear higher payroll taxes. Trade unions consider unemployment insurance "their" program and fear that without it unemployed workers in skilled trades would be forced to take lower-wage or non-union jobs. Thus, while the Supported Work Demonstration has in several states had no difficulty getting waivers to use Aid to Families with Dependent Children money to finance transitions from welfare to real jobs, in no state has this approach been permitted with unemployment-compensation money. This is the reverse of the situation in much of Western Europe, where experience rating is unheard of and where unemployment trust funds can be used far more flexibly.

The experiments in New England, California, and Minnesota—and others elsewhere—suggest that there are indeed ways of using government transfer payments dynamically. Recently, several Democratic congressmen introduced a bill

that would allow unemployment funds to be tapped by unemployed people who wanted to take job-training courses or to start new businesses. One advocacy group promoting this strategy, the Corporation for Enterprise Development, based in Washington, D.C., calls this approach "the safety net as ladder." A prime obstacle, however, is that the existing state employment-security bureaucracies and their constituents in the business and labor community are a powerful lobby for leaving the system alone.

President Reagan's budget officials recently circulated a plan to eliminate the federal supervisory role in unemployment insurance and job referral altogether. The plan is to turn the unemployment insurance payroll-tax base, and responsibility for the programs, over to the states. This at least would allow the more aggressive state administrations to develop integrated employment-security and job referral and training systems of their own. But at a time of limited public resources and pressure for further tax cuts, it would also ensure an even lower degree of public responsibility for the jobless. A better solution would be to make the system more flexible *and* to give it more resources.

The fifty-year history of employment-security programs in the United States vividly illustrates how our social programs become hobbled by compromise and inertia—in this case compromise between the government's doing nothing about periodic joblessness and its assuming full responsibility for guaranteeing everybody a job. The industrial economy has gone through a painful period of "de-

skilling" and displacement. Workers today need the means for *re-skilling* and *re-employment*; they don't need a dole, and the taxpayers are understandably reluctant to keep providing one. Rather than fighting to abandon public responsibility for the unemployed, as conservatives do, or rushing to the defense of the present structure of entitlements, as liberals do, it would make more sense to re-invent the system. This, of course, would be very difficult to do now, when there is more sentiment for reducing outlays than for improving programs. But as a matter of practical politics, the American welfare state must become either more venture-some or more truncated. It is difficult to imagine that it can keep the confidence of the public by continuing on its present course. □





A Short Story



ATOMIC TOURISM

BY JIM SHEPARD

AHEAD OF THEM A EUCALYPTUS TREE WAS SPLIT OPEN to the root, the trunk sections curled back like the peels of a banana. The eucalyptus smell filled the air.

"You may think you figured on all of this, but we're a long way from that," Tinderlee said, and turned off the road with a jerk of the wheel for emphasis. They eased around a shattered car blocking the road like a tipped dumpster. Tinderlee's hands were light on the wheel, and the sun glazed and burned the windshield. Above them, in a black willow tree, something skittered from branch to branch. His wife refused to answer. She sat upright and

touched her hand to the dash to steady herself. A fine, silken dust, the color of coffee with cream, covered the upholstery, from the open window and the long hours on this turnoff.

"I'm not saying I figured on it, exactly," she finally said, not especially upset. "I'm saying it could have been avoided. You got me here reading the map and then you don't listen to what I say. This road ends in a crater and the last road ended in a crater and it's plain as day to me we never should have gotten off 10."

She turned her head from him, as if speaking for the record. "I said all along we should have come up through the

middle, but no, you wanted to see Tallahassee. Well, here's Tallahassee. Craters so wide you could run a marching band through one end and not wake a sleeping cat on the other side. And we're five miles out yet. Here's Tallahassee."

They were listing slightly on the shoulder of Florida 319, just outside of Bellair, the Airstream behind their Buick a glittering fat tube in the sun. A lizard inched across the road and seemed to expire just short of the double yellow line, rolling onto its side, its tiny jaws slack and visible.

"Look at that," Amanda said. "That's me. We should've had iced tea and we should've been in Georgia by now."

Tinderlee made a face and eased the car into gear again. Ahead of them in the hot distance the scrub pine lining the road leaned away from the crater, a great lip of dirt and flat, ripped pavement. It looked a good ways across. On the other side what Tinderlee assumed had been Bellair looked as if it had been stamped to pieces in some kind of cosmic tantrum and the rubble dusted with sand and ash. They could make out a hint of blackness or shadow here and there in the sun. A single post stood in abject definition near the center. Hawks wheeled high above with a kind of patient optimism.

He took a last look, but Amanda seemed uninterested. He turned the Buick carefully in a wide arc across the road, its tires crunching and popping slowly on the gravel shoulder.

He said something amiable about having room to turn.

"I'm just so happy about it I could spit biscuits," Amanda said.

Tinderlee chose to ignore her. If she was going to ruin her own day, that was her business. "No harm done," he said.

"That," she said, pointing to the Geiger counter, "hasn't registered anything since Orlando. I wouldn't be knocked over with a feather if we been keeping watch on a dead machine all this time."

The Geiger counter sat unsteady, accused, on the seat between them.

It didn't matter, Tinderlee said. The Airstream straightened out behind them, and they picked up speed, Bellair diminishing in the rearview mirror. Some of the craters had grass growing in them already, he remarked. They reminded him of golf courses in spots.

But Amanda was silent, and she remained so during the loop around Tallahassee.

"You had big plans for the CB, too, I recall," she finally said. "Now for all the good it'll do us, we might as well turn on the radio."

Tinderlee smiled at a curve ahead. He said, "You sure grumble when you don't get to stop every five feet."

Amanda cracked a Coors. She took a sip and said, "Well, I don't know what put a song in your heart."

Amanda wanted to see Atlanta. She'd seen it once, years before, and she wanted to see it now. Atlanta had been hit by four different warheads at three different times, she had heard. All of them near misses. A man in an El Dorado

they'd met at a rest stop outside of Winter Garden had told them stories about the size of the devastated areas. He'd worked the air with his hands describing the mountainous jungles of rubble, the highway overpasses twisted back upon themselves. Amanda had edged forward on the picnic bench, fired with the idea. That was when she had decided she wanted Before and After pictures.

But the honest truth of it was, Tinderlee said, as the miles reeled by and they made good time heading south along areas that seemed relatively unaffected, that it would be a shame and a sin to have been right here and not to have seen all there was to see. They followed 319 down through Sopchoppy and stopped for a look-see on the bridge over the Ochlockonee. In snags and eddies the dead fish were as thick as cobblestones, slick and silver. The smell was intense. An occasional bird wing rose above the mass, the dead bird half supported on the surface of the water by the bodies of the fish. Tinderlee pointed out an unusual grayish scum lining the riverbank in spots, riding wavelets like egg white on water. They saw Dog Island and Carrabelle and Port St. Joe. They saw Spanish moss that had been reduced to cinders, and a chicken that had been blown into a power line. It hung on the line with wings outspread, feather-light in the wind. They took 71 to avoid Panama City and headed north. "We never go where I want to go," Amanda said. "I could talk until my teeth shrivel in my gums and we wouldn't go where I want to go."

They were going to Enterprise, Alabama. The slightest vibration or quirk in a gyroscopic package the size of a football had deflected an SS-18 bound for Montgomery to a spot some seventy-five miles south, in a field just east of Enterprise. The SS-18 had carried a 20-megaton warhead and had been set for groundburst, and Enterprise had been covered with red Alabama clay, like a castle in a child's sandbox. The blast had been seen in Tampa. The crater that remained had not yet been accurately measured. Tinderlee had heard estimates of depth reaching six hundred feet. Think of it, he'd said at a rest stop outside of Marianna. Amanda had chewed silently on a cucumber sandwich. He had struggled to find a simile. It was like a manmade Grand Canyon, he had finally said.

They stopped for gas whenever they could, filling jerry cans as well as the tank. Gas prices varied at the whim of the attendant, and most stations weren't selling at all. Where gas was available, the station displayed a green flag. Tinderlee pulled into a Pina station and the attendant eyed him suspiciously.

The fill-up set them back fifty-five dollars, which Tinderlee reckoned was a bargain for the area. And besides, he remarked, you save *for* a trip, not *on* one. The attendant was won over by Tinderlee's good nature and allowed that the crater near Enterprise was something to see. He suggested Childersburg, as well. It had been in the fallout pattern of Birmingham and was completely covered with ash.

"I had a cousin," the attendant went on, "who was up in Washington years ago when that mountain—St. Helens—

blew up, and she said it was exactly the same thing, to see this town. But exactly."

They thanked him and pledged to check it out. Once they pulled onto the road again, Amanda said, "I wouldn't go there if it was the last place on earth."

OUTSIDE DOTHAN THEY ATE LUNCH ON A PICNIC TABLE opposite one where another traveler sat. A healthy middle-aged man with a flat belly, he had on a blue and yellow Navy commander's cap with oak leaves on the brim. A lot of people, they had noticed, had done a bit of casual looting.

The three of them were cautious at first but soon hit it off like old friends, and the fellow, whose name was Rick Bozack, came over to their table and shared a six of Michelob Light. They discovered that he was doing something like the circuit they were on, and they felt closer to him for the coincidence. He'd just been to the Enterprise crater and recommended it highly; he passed on a tip or two concerning the best view, which was, apparently, from the north rim.

He was going to see the new bay, he said. The Soviets had lobbed a warhead of indeterminate size into the Gulf of Mexico, and it had produced a wave that had swept from Panama City to Corpus Christi in an arc. The water had never totally receded, and the Gulf had been enlarged by 15 percent or so as a result. New Orleans and Corpus Christi and everything else unlucky enough to be in the way had disappeared in the bargain.

Tinderlee and Amanda responded politely to his enthusiasm but privately considered the idea foolish: they had discussed a look at the bay and had rejected it. Why would it look any different from a normal bay? It was like going to see a flower bed after four feet of snow, Amanda had said.

But Rick Bozack kept on, talking about his old life (he'd sold incubators and heart and kidney machines out of Indianapolis). He pressed his fingertips to his gums experimentally. He slurped his beer. He seemed edgy, they both realized, as though he was trying too hard. They could see a lot of white scalp beneath the mesh of the cap.

"What kills me are these dreams I keep having," he said suddenly. "I dream about that first day."

Tinderlee looked at Amanda.

"You guys do anything like that?" Bozack asked. "Here it is years later, and I dream about that first day."

Tinderlee said they didn't.

They were silent. The wind rustled wrappers stuffed into a hulking garbage can nearby.

"What happened on the first day?" Amanda asked politely.

Rick Bozack smiled, aware of her graciousness. "Hey, I'm not going to bend your ear over something like this," he said. "It's just that it stays with me."

Tinderlee allowed that it was probably some story.

"Well," Rick Bozack said, "I was way south of Omaha,

on a 737 from New Orleans to Minneapolis, and the plane shook like somebody had hit it with a strap."

He held up an empty Michelob bottle and shook it, as a visual aid.

"We had the entire Joffrey Ballet or something like that in first class, and they'd been piling up those little bottles of hooch pretty good. They were drunk. It was a real party. Then *bam*: we dropped must've been ten thousand feet in a minute and a half. Everyone thought it was the end of the line. Screaming, bug eyes, the whole bit. Get this: the dancers are still laughing. The pilot comes on and gives us his sleepy boy from down home: seems to have been some sort of concussion to the northeast, and we can't raise Omaha. We can't raise St. Louis, either. We can't raise anybody. I didn't know it then, but our baby Boeing was coming apart in midair—the electromagnetic pulse, or whatever they said. Anyway, he's coming around in about a forty-five-degree bank, like he's back with the Hellcats in the Navy, and the next thing we know we're skimming waves of corn and he's drawling something and we're all screaming and holding onto padded seats like that's going to save us. So we made it, though a wheel collapsed, and I remember cups flying the length of the plane. And it's quiet, and the stewardesses are going from seat to seat, shaking, and telling us to take off our shoes and use the emergency slides, and to keep running when we hit the ground, in case of explosion."

He continued, oddly grateful for the chance, arranging and rearranging the beer bottles before them. He spoke of the drum roll of shoes hitting the floor, of the emergency doors blowing outward, of the yellow slides inflating like great wings.

He said, "But what I remember is this: those dancers, still laughing in first class. In the aisles they pushed and shoved like kids at recess. They pirouetted and made little leaps and the stewardess kept saying, 'Walk, please; walk.' They made those little leaps, one by one, laughing, onto the slide, the rest of them cheering each leap. The rest of us crowded into the aisles behind them, in shock. When we got into the cornfield I grabbed hold of an older woman who was having trouble with the stalks and we ran breaking through the corn like fullbacks. The dancers were way ahead of us, and we could only hear them; the corn was too high. They were laughing. Only hear them, and see them, sometimes, when they'd jump."

When they'd jump, Rick Bozack repeated, their heads and upraised arms would float above the tassels of the corn; and their laughter stayed with those running along behind, a part of the clean blue air and the sun on the corn. We could always hear the laughing, Rick Bozack said, even when the heads had disappeared.

After a moment he sat up straighter, as if to help them understand. Amanda smiled politely.

In the car later they discussed his story. Tinderlee was tickled by the idea of dancers in a cornfield, but Amanda wondered if the whole story hadn't been a big buildup for a fizzle. They were both quieter for a long stretch afterward,

staring out over their sides of the road. They'd left Rick Bozack, looking more than a little hangdog, back at the rest stop, wishing him luck on the trip.

"Thanks," he had said. "Luck."

THE CRATER THEY FOUND AT ENTERPRISE WAS MORE stupefying than they had imagined. They looked into the great hole and at its staggering walls opposite them in the distance. Amanda's jaw went a little slack. The landscape was wild, impossible, otherworldly. In the great strata of rock so far below Tinderlee fancied he could make out shapes: a duck, a horse, Cuba. A lightning bolt, hundreds of feet wide. They seemed to have the crater all to themselves. A devastated oak with denuded branches stood on the opposite edge and indicated scale.

A grayish moss grew in great patches on nearby rocks. A vast, empty silence hung over the pit. Tinderlee could make out, toward the bottom, garbage that people had thrown in. The breeze picked up and Amanda went back to the car for her jacket. They followed a path a few hundred feet along the lip, but Amanda could on no account be coaxed to look over. Water was collecting at the very bottom, forming a lake.

They used their fingers in the air to trace the various reds and browns of the clay in the far wall, some of the bands thicker than a city block was long. They stood holding hands, quieted by the scope of what they saw.

They stayed on in the fading light until Amanda admitted that she'd had enough of holes in the ground to last her a lifetime. Then they walked back up the path, got silently into the Buick, and headed east on 27 for Atlanta.

They stopped to sleep by the side of the road. In the Airstream, Tinderlee lay on his back, still feeling weak. He looked through the window at the night sky, beautiful and clear, and at the stars beyond.

"I wonder where Rick Bozack is now," he said.

"I was just thinking the same thing," Amanda murmured, next to him.

The rain beat down on them in a fury the next morning, all the way through western Georgia, encouraging their silence and not letting up until they were nearing Atlanta itself. The Geiger counter sputtered and acted up fitfully. Tinderlee felt stiff and melancholy, and Amanda kept to herself, sucking noisily on a peach pit. When the sun finally came out, she sighed with relief and said, "Maybe we should cut this trip short. Maybe we've done enough."

"Maybe," Tinderlee said.

They rested up and showered at a Days' Inn in McDonough, though that set them back more than they would have liked, and were on the road again by nine-thirty. They were both still quiet. As they approached the city limits, Tinderlee had to thread his way from open road to open road like a penitent drunk on his way home. They spent much of the last leg on 23, creeping past the hulks of jackknifed trailer trucks strewn every so often across the road like geometric boulders.

They drove slowly toward the downtown area, bumping along steep shoulders and climbing onto sidewalks to keep going. At an intersection a traffic light hung down at windshield level like a baleful electronic guard. An office building had collapsed into the street in a great slide of concrete and glass and steel.

Tinderlee eased the Buick off the road and into a parking lot, the Airstream groaning over the curb.

They walked quite a distance in silence, Tinderlee occasionally checking a map that seemed of no use anymore. It flapped in the slight wind, blandly indicating avenues no longer visible and directions no longer relevant. They climbed rubble that gave way, with dull sounds, beneath their feet, and passed among jagged hills of debris. Far off the breeze was banging something metal against something else. Amanda pointed out an undamaged fire hydrant, and an open umbrella, with a rainbow pattern on one side, centered on a traffic island. She fingered a dog's leash and collar still tied to a parking meter. She lifted it, and the empty collar swayed near her head like a thought balloon.

They continued on, with the banging sound curious and childlike in the distance. Tinderlee carried with him a small, soiled stuffed animal.

Finally Amanda turned an ankle on a loose curb, and they stopped. She got sick again, and knelt over a sewer grate. He set the animal down and bent over her, their breathing audible from their exertions.

He centered his compass on a reasonably level piece of concrete and told Amanda that he didn't see any sense in looking for the downtown area because, plainly, they either were in it or had passed through it.

She sat down heavily and had to agree. Her hair moved against her cheek delicately. She was very pale. "Did you notice the bugs?" she said.

Tinderlee told her he had. "City of bugs, now," he added.

"How are you?" she said. "You okay?"

"I'll do," he said.

"I'm not so good," she said. "All those remts and rads."

She smiled. He realized her sadness and understood that she'd been sad all along. "Where're we going to go from here?" she asked.

"I don't know," he said. In the shadow of a side street a pennant or shirt sleeve fluttered. "Maybe take a rest."

She smiled wanly and nodded to let him know that she liked the idea. She seemed to want to do something with her hand, but was unable to. "I don't think I can go back to the car," she said. He got up to see to her comfort, and she said, "Look," gesturing, her voice full of loss. He followed her gaze to the battered wall of a bank nearby, the letters FEDERAL SAVINGS still intact. The whole wall was blackened, with the whitish silhouette of a figure, its arms crossed before its face, fixed upon the black surface like the quiet, permanent shadow of a dream or a photographic negative. □

THE PAST

BY GALWAY KINNELL

A chair under one arm,
 a desktop under the other,
 the same Smith-Corona
 on my back I even now batter
 words into visibility with,
 I would walk miles,
 assemble my writing stall,
 type all day, many sheets
 of prose and verse all blown
 away, while herring gulls
 and once a sightseeing plane
 turned overhead. The lean-
 to of driftwood that thirty-
 three-and-a-third years back
 I put up on this spot
 leans all the way down,
 all its driftwood re-drifts.
 Spray jumps and blows.
 A few gulls fly that way,
 a few this. A single duck
 whettles out to sea
 in straight flight—solitary vector
 of purpose. As for the Quonset hut
 I broke into without breaking it
 when the storms came, it too
 has gone, swept out, burned up,
 buried under, nobody knows. Too
 bad. But for me not all
 that bad. For of the four
 possibilities—from *me-and-it-*
still-here to it-and-me-
both-gone, this one, *me-here-*
it-gone, is second best,
 and will do, for me, for now.
 But I wanted it still to be here.
 I wanted to sit at the table
 and look up and see the sea spray
 and beach grass happy together.
 I wanted to remember the details:
 the dingy, sprouted potatoes,
 the Portuguese bread, the Bokar coffee,
 the dyed oranges far from home,
 the water tasting of decayed aluminum,
 the kerosene stench. The front
 steps where I sat and heard

the excitement that comes into sand,
 the elation into the poverty grass,
 when the wind rises. In a letter
 which cast itself down in General
 Delivery, Provincetown, my friend
 and mentor warned, "Don't lose
 all touch with humankind." One day
 while all around gulls whistled
 their thin, exhausted screams,
 the wind put a sudden sheen
 or flatness like spiritual quietness
 across the water. Now two
 waves of the North Atlantic
 roll in side by side,
 converge, ripple into one
 and rush up the beach—making me
 jump back—and vanish
 under white bubbles all suddenly
 popping away at once. Here
 waves slap not in time
 but in evanescence, a rhythmless medium.
 Mere comings, mere goings. Though now
 there's somewhat less coming
 in the comings and more
 going in the goings. Between
 the two straggles only
 such an indicated boundary
 as the sea lets the moon spell and die out
 between world and world,
 a wandering thread solitary walkers
 follow along a beach, cross
 and re-cross, spinning it
 with their tracks all the way
 into disappearance. So you see,
 to reach the past is easy. A snap.
 A snap of the sea and a third of a century
 passes. All nothing. Or all all,
 if that sounds more faithful. But anyway
 all gone. The work of
 whoziwhatzit—Zeit . . . Zman . . . Chas . . .
 whatever . . . Whichever
 you strike with the desperate tongue
 gives a deadened sound, as though
 the thing itself were fake; or unspeakable.

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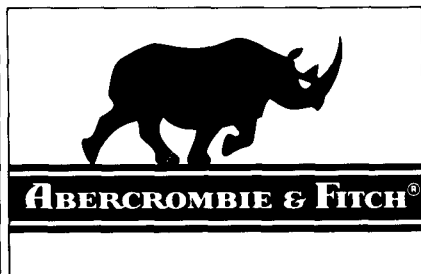
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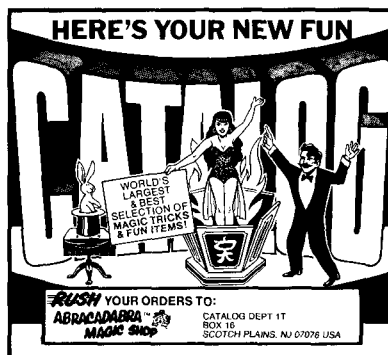
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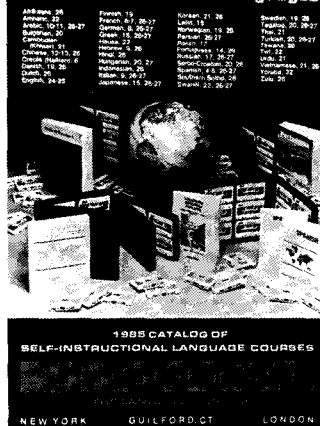
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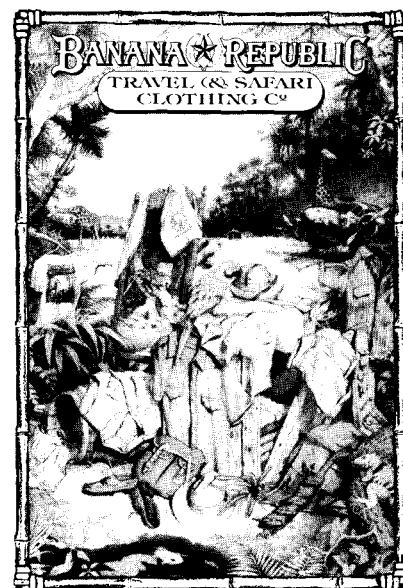


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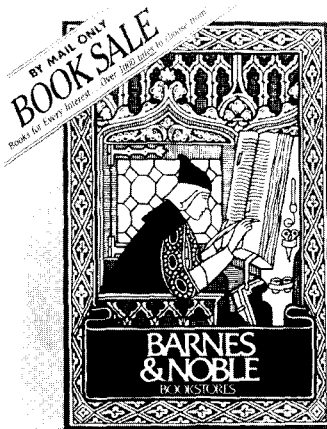
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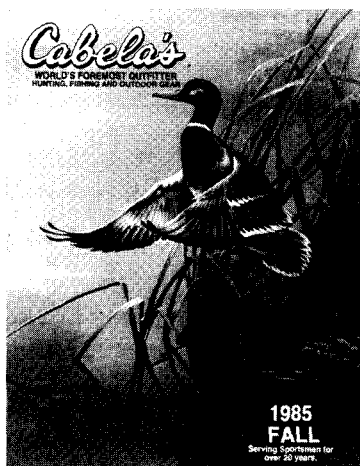
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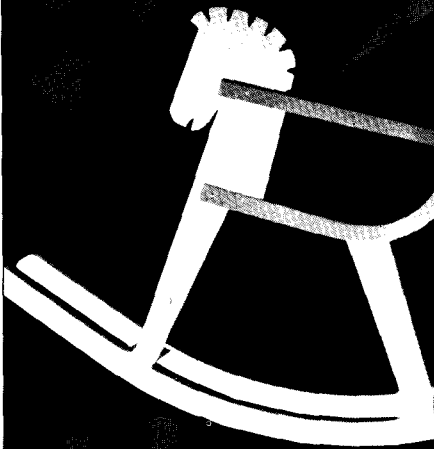
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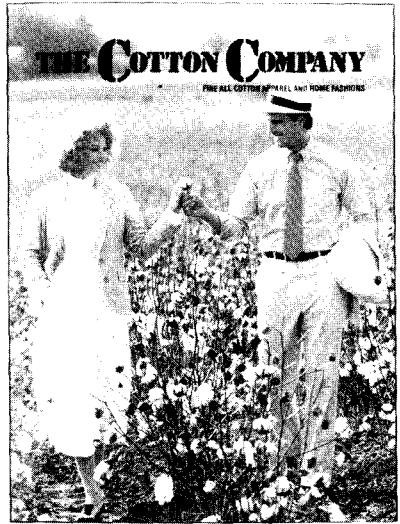
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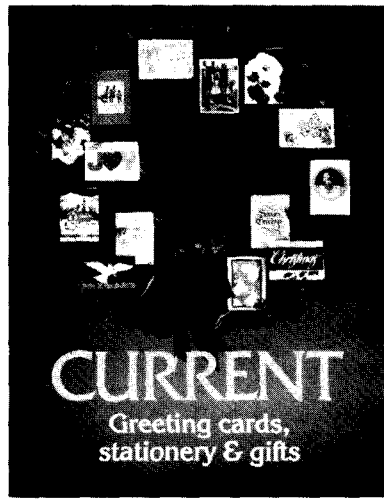
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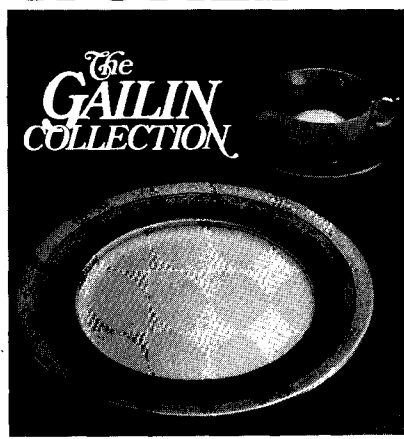
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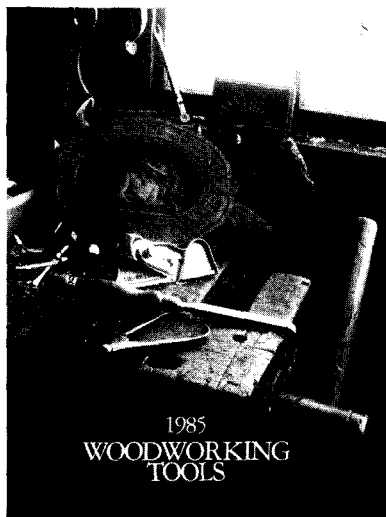
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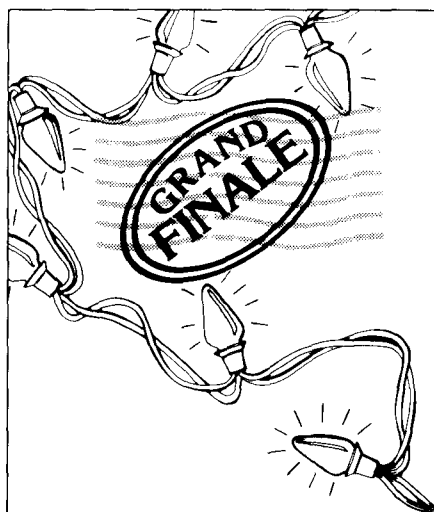
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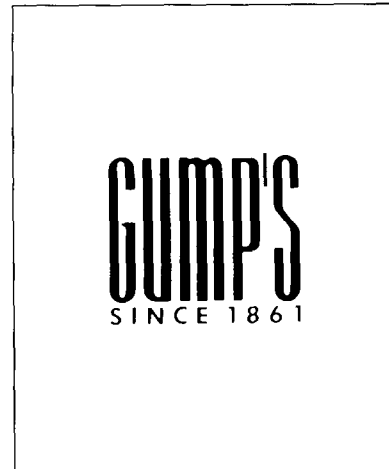
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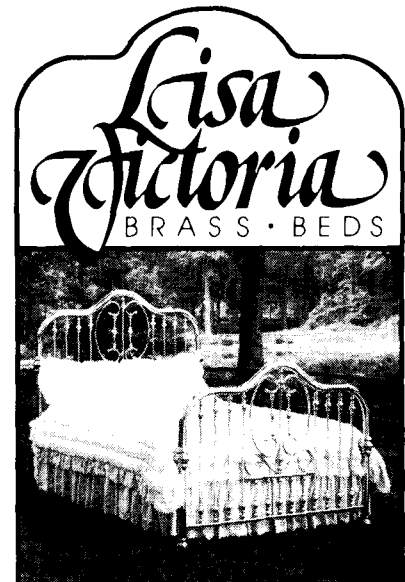
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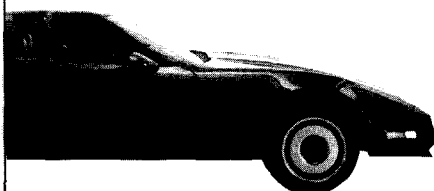
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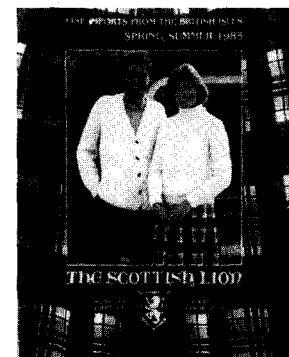


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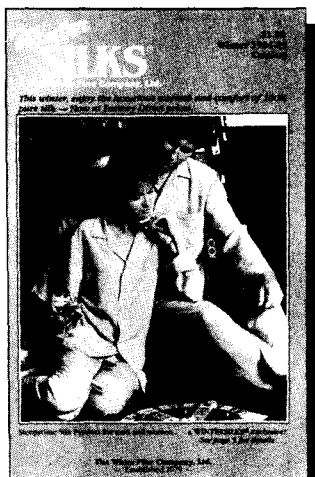


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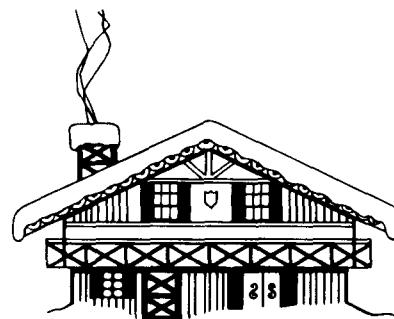
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ORNETTE'S PERMANENT REVOLUTION

BY FRANCIS DAVIS

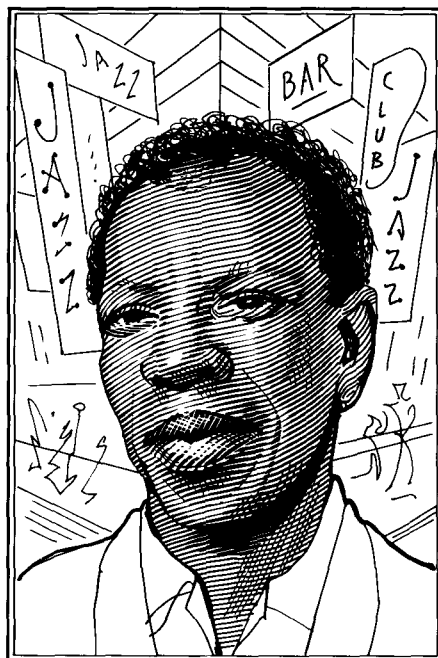
ALL HELL BROKE loose when the alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman made his East Coast nightclub debut, at the Five Spot Cafe, in Greenwich Village, on November 17, 1959—twenty-five years ago last fall.

The twenty-nine-year-old Coleman arrived in New York having already won the approval of some of the most influential jazz opinion makers of the period. "Ornette Coleman is doing the only really new thing in jazz since the innovations in the mid-forties of Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and those of Thelonious Monk," John Lewis, the pianist and musical director of the Modern Jazz Quartet, is reported to have said after hearing Coleman in Los Angeles. (Lewis is later helped Coleman secure a contract with Atlantic Records.) Coleman's other champions included the critics Nat Hentoff and Martin Williams and the composer Gunther Schuller, all of whom wrote for the magazine *Jazz Review*. "I honestly believe . . . that what Ornette Coleman is doing on alto will affect the whole character of jazz music profoundly and pervasively," Williams wrote, a month before Coleman opened at the Five Spot.

Not all of Williams's colleagues shared his enthusiasm, once they were given the opportunity to hear Coleman for themselves. In *Down Beat*, George Hoefer described the reactions of the audience at a special press preview at the Five Spot: "Some walked in and out before they could finish a drink, some sat mesmerized by the sound, others talked constantly to their neighbors at the table or argued with drink in hand at the bar." Many critics, finding Coleman's music strident and incoherent, feared that his influence on jazz would be deleterious. Others doubted that he would exert any influence on jazz at all. Still others, bewildered by Coleman's music and preferring to take a wait-and-see position on its merits, accused Coleman's supporters at *Jazz Review* of touting Coleman for their own aggrandizement. Musicians—always skeptical of newcomers, and envious of the publicity

Coleman was receiving—denounced him even more harshly than critics did. Some questioned his instrumental competence; the outspoken Miles Davis questioned Coleman's sanity.

Interneecine squabbling over the merits of historical movements and geographical schools was nothing new in the jazz world. But not since a short-lived vogue for the rather decrepit New Orleans trumpeter Bunk Johnson two dec-



ades earlier (and perhaps not even then) had one musician split opinion so cleanly down the middle. Coleman was either a visionary or a charlatan, and there was no middle ground between advocacy and disapproval. The controversy raged, spreading from the music journals to the daily newspapers and general-interest magazines, where it gradually turned comic. Every VIP in Manhattan, from Leonard Bernstein to Dorothy Kilgallen, seemed to have wisdom to offer on the subject of Ornette Coleman. In Thomas Pynchon's novel *V*, there is a character named McClintic Sphere, who plays an alto saxophone of hand-carved ivory (Coleman's was made of white plastic) at a club called the V Note.

"He plays all the notes Bird missed," somebody whispered in front of Fu. Fu went silently through the motions of breaking a beer bottle on the edge of the table, jamming it into the speaker's back and twisting.

FOR THOSE OF US who began listening to jazz after 1959, it is difficult to believe that Coleman's music was once the source of such animus and widespread debate. Given the low visibility of jazz today, a figure comparable to Coleman arriving on the scene might find himself in the position of shouting "Fire" in an empty theater.

Looking back, it also strains belief that so many of Coleman's fellow musicians initially failed to recognize the suppleness of his phrasing and the keen-ing vox-humana quality of his intonation. Jazz musicians have always respected instrumentalists whose inflections echo the natural cadences of speech, and they have always sworn by the blues (although as jazz has increased in sophistication, "the blues" has come to signify a feeling or a tonal coloring, in addition to a specific form). Coleman's blues authenticity—the legacy of the juke joints in his native Fort Worth, Texas, where he had played as a teenager—should have scored him points instantly. Instead, his ragged, down-home sound seems to have cast him in the role of country cousin to slicker, more urbanized musicians—as embarrassing a reminder of the past to them as a Yiddish-speaking relative might have been to a newly assimilated Jew. In 1959 the "old country" for most black musicians was the American South, and few of them wanted any part of it.

What must have bothered musicians still more than the unmistakable southern dialect of Coleman's music was its apparent formlessness, its flouting of rules that most jazz modernists had invested a great deal of time and effort in mastering. In the wake of bebop, jazz had become a music of enormous harmonic complexity. By the late 1950s it seemed to be in danger of becoming a playground for virtuosos, as the once liberating practice of running the chords became routine. If some great players sounded at times as though they lacked commitment and were simply going through the motions, it was because the motions were what they had become most committed to.

In one sense, the alternative that Coleman proposed amounted to nothing

more drastic than a necessary (and, in retrospect, inevitable) suppression of harmony in favor of melody and rhythm—but that was regarded as heresy in 1959. It has often been said that Coleman dispensed with recurring chord patterns altogether, in both his playing and his writing. The comment is not entirely accurate, however. Rather, he regarded a chord sequence as just one of many options for advancing a solo. Coleman might improvise from chords or, as inspiration moved him, he might instead use as his point of departure “a mood, fragments of melody, an area of pitch, or rhythmic patterns,” to quote the critic Martin Williams. Moreover, Coleman’s decision to dispense with a chordal road map also permitted him

1959. John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, and Thelonious Monk, among others, were looking beyond Charlie Parker’s harmonic discoveries to some of the rhythmic and structural implications of bop. Cecil Taylor and George Russell were experimenting with chromaticism and pantonality, and a Miles Davis Sextet featuring Coltrane and Bill Evans had just recorded *Kind of Blue*, an album that introduced a new spaciousness to jazz by replacing chords with modes and scales. But it was Coleman who was making the cleanest break with convention, and Coleman whose intuitive vision of the future bore the most natural relationship to the music’s country origins. He was a godsend, as it turned out.

tended his reach to symphonies, string quartets, and experiments in funk. By now he has attracted two generations of disciples.

There are the original sidemen in his quartet and their eventual replacements: the trumpeters Cherry and Bobby Bradford; the tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman; the bassists Charlie Haden, Scott LaFaro, Jimmy Garrison, and David Izenzon; and the drummers Billy Higgins, Ed Blackwell, and Charles Moffett. These musicians were followed in the late 1970s by younger ones who brought to Coleman’s bands the high voltage of rock and funk: for example, the guitarist James Blood Ulmer, the electric bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma, and the drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson. Some of Coleman’s early associates in Texas and California, such as the clarinetist John Carter and the flutist Prince Lawsha, have gone on to produce work that shows Coleman’s influence unmistakably.

Coleman planted the seed for the free-jazz movement of the 1960s, which in turn gave rise to a school of European themeless improvisors, led by the guitarist Derek Bailey and the saxophonist Evan Parker. Since 1965 Coleman has performed on trumpet and violin in addition to alto and tenor saxophones, and several young violinists have taken him as their model: for example, Billy Bang, whose jaunty, anthemlike writing bespeaks his affection for Coleman. And for all practical purposes, the idea of collective group improvisation, which has reached an apex in the work of a number of groups affiliated with the Chicago-based Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, began with the partial liberation of bass and drums from chordal and timekeeping duties in the first Ornette Coleman Quartet.

IF ONE LISTENS closely for them, one can hear Colemanesque accents in the most unlikely places: the maundering piano soliloquies of Keith Jarrett and the bickering, simultaneous improvisations of young hard-boppers like Wynton and Branford Marsalis. Yet for all that, Coleman’s way has never really supplanted Charlie Parker’s as the lingua franca of jazz, as many hoped and others feared it would.

One reason could be that Coleman’s low visibility has denied the jazz avant-garde a figurehead. Since his debut at the Five Spot, Coleman has set a price for concerts and recordings that reflects



rhythmic trespass across bar lines. The stealthy rubato of Coleman’s phrases and his sudden accelerations of tempo implied liberation from strict meter, much as his penchant for hitting notes a quarter-tone sharp or flat and his refusal to harmonize his saxophone with Don Cherry’s trumpet during group passages implied escape from the well-tempered scale.

Ultimately, rhythm may be the area in which Coleman has made his most significant contributions to jazz. Perhaps the trick of listening to his performances lies in an ability to hear rhythm as melody, the way he seems to do, and the way early jazz musicians did. Some of Coleman’s comeliest phrases, like some of King Oliver’s or Sidney Bechet’s, sound as though they were scooped off a drum-head.

Coleman was hardly the only jazz musician to challenge chordal hegemony in

IN 1959 COLEMAN’S music truly represented Something Else (to quote the title of his first album). Whether it also forecast *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (the title of another early album of Coleman’s) is still problematical. Certainly Coleman’s impact on jazz was immediate and it has proved long-lasting. Within a few years of Coleman’s first New York engagement established saxophonists like Coltrane, Rollins, and Jackie McLean were playing a modified Colemanesque free form, often in the company of former Coleman sidemen. The iconoclastic bassist Charles Mingus (initially one of Coleman’s antagonists) was leading a pianoless quartet featuring the alto saxophonist Eric Dolphy and the trumpeter Ted Curson, whose open-ended dialogues rivaled in abandon those of Coleman and Cherry.

Over the years Coleman has continued to cast a long shadow, as he has ex-

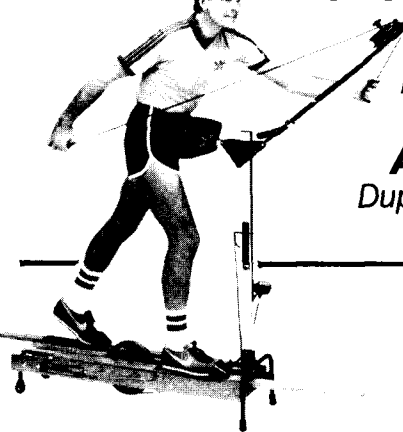
what he perceives to be his artistic merit rather than his limited commercial appeal. Needless to say, he has had very few takers. As a result, he performs only occasionally, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he bears some responsibility for his own neglect.

Just a few years ago it appeared that Coleman's star was on the rise again. In 1977 his former sidemen Cherry, Redman, Haden, and Blackwell formed a quartet called Old and New Dreams. Coleman compositions, old and new, accounted for roughly half of the group's repertoire. If the myth that Coleman had to be physically present in order for his music to be played properly persisted in some quarters, Old and New Dreams dispelled it once and for all. The band played Coleman's music with a joy and a sense of purpose that bore witness to Coleman's acuity as a composer. The success of Old and New Dreams showed that the music that had once been both hailed and reviled as the wave of the future had taken a firm enough hold in the past to inspire nostalgia.

The rapture with which jazz audiences greeted the band's reinterpretation of vintage Coleman owed something to the fact that Coleman himself had moved on to other frontiers—appearing with two electric guitarists, two bass guitarists, and two drummers in a band he called Prime Time. The group provided the working model for a cryptic (and, one suspects, largely after-the-fact) theory of tonality that Coleman called harmolodics. The theory held that instruments can play together in different keys without becoming tuneless or exchanging the heat of the blues for a frigid atonality. (As the critic Robert Palmer pointed out in the magazine *The New York Rocker*, Coleman's music had always been "harmolodic.") In practice the harmolodic theory functioned like a MacGuffin in a Hitchcock film: if you could follow what it was all about, good for you; if you couldn't, that wasn't going to hamper your enjoyment one iota. What mattered more than any amount of theorizing was that Coleman was leading jazz out of a stalemate, much as he had in 1959. He had succeeded in locating indigenous jazz rhythms that play upon the reflexes of the body the way the simultaneously bracing and relaxing polyrhythms of funk and New Wave rock-and-roll do.

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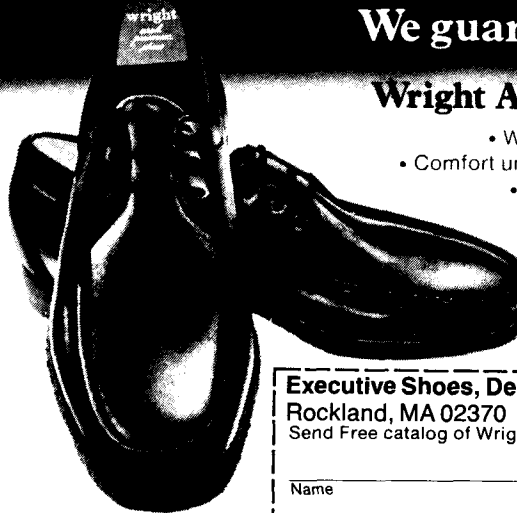
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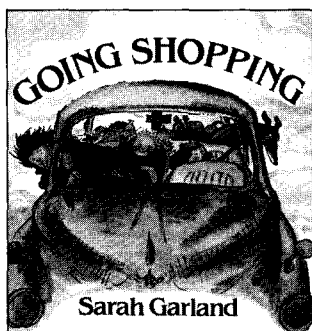
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Coleman wasn't slumming or taking the path of least resistance in search of a mass following. Nonetheless, a modest commercial breakthrough seemed imminent in 1981, when he signed with Island Records and named Sid and Stanley Bernstein (the former is the promoter who brought the Beatles to Shea Stadium) as his managers. There is some disagreement among the principal parties about what happened next, but Coleman released only one album on the Island label. In 1983 he severed his ties with the Bernstein brothers and once more went into a partial eclipse.

Lately the task of shedding Coleman's light has fallen to Ulmer, Tacuma, and Jackson. They have been no more successful than Coleman in attracting a mass audience, despite a greater willingness to accommodate public tastes—and despite reams of hype from the intellectual wing of the pop-music press. When Coleman next emerges from the shadows, he may have discarded harmolodics in favor of some other invention.

IN THE FINAL analysis, Coleman's failure to redefine jazz as decisively as many predicted he would is more the result of the accelerated pace at which jazz was evolving *before* he arrived in New York than of his lack of activity afterward. During the fifty years prior to Coleman's debut a series of upheavals had taken jazz far from its humble folk beginnings and made of it a codified art music. It was as though jazz had imitated the evolution of European concert music in a fraction of the time. Just as the term "classical music" has come to signify European concert music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the words "modern jazz" have become synonymous with the style of jazz originally called bebop.

With Ornette Coleman, jazz established its permanent avant-garde—a "new" that would always remain new. If one measures a player's influence solely by the number of imitators he spawns and veteran players who adopt aspects of his style (the usual yardstick in jazz), Coleman finishes among his contemporaries a distant third behind Davis and Coltrane. Yet his accomplishment seems somehow greater than theirs. Davis and Coltrane showed which elements of free form the jazz mainstream could absorb (modality, approximate harmonies, saxophone glossolalia, the sixteenth note as a basic unit of measurement, the

use of auxiliary percussion and of horns once considered "exotic") and which elements it finally could not (variable pitch, free meter, collective improvisation). Coleman's early biography is replete with stories of musicians packing up their instruments and leaving the bandstand when he tried to sit in. If Coleman now showed up incognito at a jam session presided over by younger followers of Parker, Davis, and Coltrane, chances are he would be given the cold shoulder. Bebop seems to be invincible, though Coleman and other prophets without honor continue to challenge its hegemony.

The bop revolution of the 1940s was a successful coup d'état. The revolution that Ornette Coleman started is never wholly going to succeed or fail. Coleman's revolution has proved to be permanent. Its skirmishes have marked the emergence of jazz as a full-fledged modern art, with all of modernism's dualities and contradictions.

NO MODERN-JAZZ record library is complete without the albums that Ornette Coleman recorded for Atlantic Records from 1959 to 1961, including *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (SD1317), *Change of the Century* (SD1327), *This Is Our Music* (SD1353), *Free Jazz* (SD1364), *Ornette!* (SD1378), and *Ornette on Tenor* (SD1394). Although most of them remain in print, the question arises why Atlantic has never re-issued its Coleman material in chronological order, complete with unissued titles and alternate takes. This seminal music merits such historical presentation.

Coleman's recordings with Prime Time and its immediate precursors are *Dancing in Your Head* (A&M Horizon SP-722), *Body Mehta* (Artists House AH-1), and *Of Human Feelings* (Island/Antilles AN-2001). The group Old and New Dreams, which still exists as a part-time endeavor, has released three albums, including *Playing* (ECM-1-1205) and two titled *Old and New Dreams* on different labels (ECM-1-1154 and Black Saint BSR-0013).

Other essential Coleman includes his album-length concerto for alto saxophone and orchestra, *The Skies of America* (Columbia KC-31562); his duets with the bassist Charlie Haden, *Soap Suds* (Artist House AH-6); and his best concert recordings, *The Ornette Coleman Trio Live at the Golden Circle, Volumes 1 & 2* (Blue Note BST - 84224 and BST - 84225, available separately). □

THEATER

THE RED MIME OF MILAN

BY CHARLES C. MANN

OVER THE COURSE of a single week in 1977 two versions of the life of Christ were broadcast on two state-run Italian television networks. One, *Jesus of Nazareth*, was a docudrama directed by Franco Zeffirelli, in the lush but static manner that has earned him renown throughout Europe and the Americas. Graced by a halo at appropriate moments, the handsome, pensive young actor who played the Savior delivered the Sermon on the Mount in modern Italian. The production was suffused with traditional Sunday-school virtues of reverence, humility, and awe. When *Jesus of Nazareth* was shown in the United States, it was greeted with respectful critical noises.

The second version of the Gospel, *Mistero Buffo*, was written and directed by an actor and playwright named Dario Fo, who played all the parts himself. There were no halos—indeed, no props, sets, or scenery. Wearing a black turtleneck and dark denims, Fo simply walked onstage before a live audience and for the next four hours delivered parodies of medieval mystery plays. Known as *misteri buffi*, these sketches were originally done by street performers during the Middle Ages. Fo found and adapted them in the course of several years' research. Woven into a single performance, these short pieces make *Mistero Buffo* a life of Christ as seen from the point of view of the crowd. Bawdy, loud, and viciously anticlerical, the play is anything but reverent in the commonly accepted sense of the term.

Whereas ecclesiastical authorities accused Zeffirelli's *Jesus*, Fo's *Mistero Buffo* was soon embroiled in what Italians like to call polemics. To Fo's pleasure, the Vatican described his play as the most blasphemous program ever broadcast; Zeffirelli said it should never have appeared on television. Their distaste was related less to the nature of the play—unlike the United States, Italy has a strong tradition of anticlericalism—than to the remarkable gifts of its star. Fo is one of the great performers of this century. In *Mistero Buffo* he had mil-

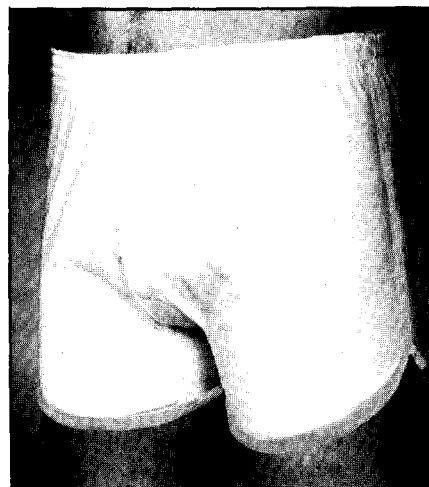
lions of people guffawing at his savage, relentless send-ups of the Pope, the Church, and the Italian power structure in general.

DARIO FO WAS BORN in 1926 and raised in a small lakeside town near the Swiss border. The place was a backwater in a way that is now difficult to comprehend: there was no electricity, radio, or cinema, and a chief source of entertainment for the poor peasants and fishermen was the tales and ballads improvised by itinerant actors in exchange for meals. The stories that Fo heard were exaggerated comic narratives that contrasted the audience's poverty with the wealth of their absentee landlords in Milan and Turin. Part of a tradition of rural protest that went back for centuries, the strolling players fascinated Fo as a child. To some extent his career has been devoted to bringing their peculiar charms to the modern theater.

After spending his adolescence avoiding Mussolini's army, the nineteen-year-old Fo went to the war-ravaged city of Milan. He attended art school and a college of architecture but found himself drawn to the theater, hiding in the balconies to watch the famous director Giorgio Strehler conduct rehearsals. In 1950 he joined a small troupe that did semi-improvised sketches before local audiences; the results were broadcast over the radio. The show was successful enough that Fo was allowed to do his own mildly naughty radio program, *Poor nano* (*Poor Dwarf*, 1951). By 1953 he had written and directed his first full revue, *Il dito nell'occhio* (*Finger in the Eye*). The cast of the show included a member of a famous touring theatrical family, Franca Rame, whom Fo soon married, and a French mime named Jacques Lecoq, who advocated the "black," or "dirty," style of mime that Fo was to make his own.

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use these techniques paint their faces white, do not speak, and spend their time onstage being gracefully crushed by imaginary weights, feeling their way along unreal walls, or fighting back hurricane winds that exist only for the performer.

"Black" mimes are their funkier brethren: they talk, they do not paint their faces, and they don't do much of the balletic stuff. With a few gestures and a slight tilt to his tall, pudgy body, Fo does mime the way Count Basie played piano—sparely, simply, and elegantly, without a wasted motion.

Il dito nell'occhio was a potted history of the world of the type done here by comics like Sid Caesar, Mel Brooks, and the Smothers Brothers. Somewhat topical in its thrust, it was a rousing success. Encouraged, Fo became more daring. His next show, *I sani da legare* (*Fit to Be Tied*, 1954), made fun of red scares in Italy and America, Soviet suppression of dissent, and Black Shirts hiding in government ministries. *I sani da legare* was censored, and the performances of Fo's bowdlerized script were patrolled by the police. Ever since, Fo has run afoul of Italy's libel laws, which by U.S. standards are quite conservative.

During the next few years Fo energetically turned out Feydeau-like farces on subjects such as transvestite detectives investigating Italy's then-illegal divorce agencies (*I cadaveri si spediscono, le donne si spogliano*, or *Mail the Corpse, the Lady's Naked*, 1959); hookers, bureaucrats, and con men in the Milanese underworld (*Gli arcangeli non giocano a flipper*, or *Archangels Don't Play Pinball*, 1960); and a lunatic priest who takes up a life of crime (*Aveva due pistole con gli occhi bianchi e neri*, or *He Had Two Pistols with Black and White Eyes*, 1960). All were pleasant trifles with a slightly political spin. In 1962 Fo and Rame, who was by then his usual costar, were invited to contribute sketches to a popular television variety show with the ludicrous name of *Canzonissima* (literally, *Really Big Song*). They soon encountered censorship problems, especially after Fo responded to a wave of industrial accidents by performing a bit about a worker in a meat-canning factory whose hugely fat aunt visits him on the job, stumbles into the machinery, and comes out as so many cans of processed meat. "The aunts [of Italy] weren't offended by all of this," Fo remarked later. "But we got a lot of flak from canned-meat producers and industrialists in general." The flak

led to severe restrictions by the increasingly nervous producers of *Canzonissima*, which in turn triggered a much-publicized walkout by Fo and Rame.

Fo returned to the stage with his first historical play, *Isabella, tre caravelle, e un cacciaballe* (*Isabella, Three Ships, and a Con Man*, 1963), a debunking of the story of Columbus that mixes, in a curiously pleasing way, techniques from Brecht, jibes at the expense of Italian authorities, and Lucy-and-Desi arguments between Queen Isabella and King Ferdi-



nand. *Isabella* manifests all the trappings of Fo's mature style: a simple, bluntly phrased attack, a love of parodistic jargon, and lots of vaudevillian business. Fo does not rely primarily on verbal humor. Rather, his lines are the spoken framework for a clown routine; the words hold together a baroque jumble of mime and gesture. Almost lifeless when read, the play is so effective on stage that Fo and Rame were assaulted by neo-Fascists after one performance and the shows were frequently disrupted by the police.

DURING THE POLITICAL convulsions that swept Europe in 1968, Fo and Rame became dissatisfied with being what they described as "the jesters of the bourgeoisie," their ideas tolerated because they made the middle classes laugh within the safe confines of the theater. (A current American example of what they meant might be the Broadway hit *La Cage aux Folles*, in which a wash of music and dance lets the audience momentarily give itself the thrill of not being horrified by homosexuality.) To escape this pigeonhole, Fo and Rame decided to take the risky route of playing in the Italian equivalent of grange halls, using the simplest of sets and props for rough-and-tumble sketches and deliberately avoiding traditional climaxes and cathartic ending points. Like Brecht before him, Fo began to think about stripping the theater of its naturalistic trappings in order to transform it into a medium for the direct portrayal of political affairs, but he went about this task in a very different way.

Fo was inspired by the ancestors of the lakeside storytellers who had entranced him as a child: the ninth- to twelfth-century *giullari*—wandering minstrels who performed vulgar anti-authoritarian satires in the piazzas of European city-states. Using a hodgepodge of regional dialects, the *giullari* carried news from town to town, made fun of clergy and gentry, and frequently attracted the ire of local noblemen. The height of the *giullarata* occurred during the Feast of Fools—the rowdy pre-Lenten celebration that erupted annually in the slums of medieval cities. Men dressed like women and women dressed like men; rich people stayed behind locked doors as revelers from the poorer quarters roamed outside. Typical events included performances of *misteri buffi* and mock Masses, in which the celebrants would sit backward in their pews and bray like asses—continually urged on by the hoots of the *giullari*.

Today Fo regards the *giullari*, with their partly improvised style, physically active comedic techniques, and savage mockery of oppression, as one of the wellsprings of Western theater, and he views his own work as an attempt to reclaim this nearly lost tradition. In the preface to one of his published plays, Fo wrote, "If you look into the original Greek theater, you'll see that the popular stage has always used grotesquerie, satire, lampoons, low comedy, and even—why not?—scurrility to achieve

its end of soiling, deflating, and bursting the balloon that the ruling class has always tried to keep pumped up." Laugh-ter, Fo likes to say, exposes the mind to the spikes of reason. By Fo's account, he is trying to speak to the common man on his own terms and in his own rough lan-guage. The emblem of this attempt is *Mistero Buffo*, generally considered his greatest play.

First performed in 1969 and subse-quently seen by tens of millions of peo-ple on four continents, *Mistero Buffo* is a mixture of old and new texts—never the same two shows running—that has evolved into a remarkable display of mimicry, erudition, song, and satire. It is performed almost entirely in medieval dialects; the printed text of the play comes complete with a translation into Italian on facing pages. Before each skit Fo summarizes the plot; audiences are then carried along by his voice, his ges-tures, and the astonishing range of ex-pressions that animate his rubbery face. The effect is powerful enough that in 1983 *Mistero Buffo* took London by storm and apparently saved the theater in which Fo performed from financial ruin. The reviews were universally enthusias-tic, although one critic complained about the presence on stage of a transla-tor; unnecessary, in his view, given Fo's skill. Indeed, the near incomprehensi-bility of the language means that audi-ences have to work in order to keep up. Guided by Fo, spectators must write the play in their own heads. Watching Fo is an active, not a passive, experience.

Barely moving his body, Fo does a ver-sion of the resurrection of Lazarus as seen by the rubbernecks thronging the grave site; he plays more than a dozen characters, ranging from the incensed cemetery groundskeeper, who reprimands everyone for tearing up the lawns, to the inevitable man who bel-lows, "Hey, you! Down in front!" All are utterly, humanly ignorant of the sacred meaning of the miracle. As Fo acts out the story, Lazarus's grief-torn parents have lied to Jesus: their son has been dead for a month, not three days. When the resurrection occurs, the onlookers are first appalled by the worms and the smell, then wildly enthusiastic. The playlet finishes with the applause turn-ing into shrieks of dismay; pickpockets have taken advantage of the moment of euphoria to relieve the spectators of their wallets.

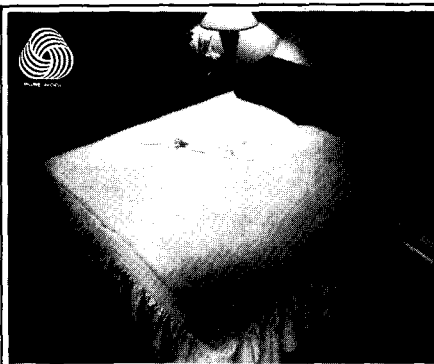
Other bits along the way include a lush's liquid recounting of the wedding

at Cana; the efforts of a legless man to avoid being cured by Christ, because the cripple knows he is better off outside society; and a vicious portrait of Boni-face VIII, the dictatorial Pope for whom Dante reserved a special place in Hell. The figures of the Gospel—the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, Jesus—do not appear until the final scenes, when they are accompanied by the Maniac, a stock medieval character. (Somewhat softer versions of this fellow turn up in Elizabethan dramas, in which he is usu-ally called the Fool.) Impressed by the vigor with which Christ has ejected the bankers from the temple, the Maniac re-gards this whole Crucifixion routine as a waste of a promising insurrection. He tries to bribe the soldiers to take Christ off the cross but is stymied by the Sav-ior's refusal to be saved. Then Mary rushes in on the scene at Golgotha and attempts to pull her son free, ending up in an appalling, blackly funny tug-of-war with the embarrassed Roman guards. Fi-nally stopped, Mary deliriously attacks Gabriel, the angel who told her of her destiny. (The reader is asked to recall that Fo performs what follows in the Ital-ian equivalent of Chaucerian English.)

MARY: Fly, Gabriel! Go back and spread your wings in your beautiful, glorious Heaven, Gabriel. There's nothing for you on this monstrous Earth, this tormented world. Go! lest you soil your gentle rainbow wings. Can you not see the stink of mud, smoke, and blood? Go! lest your deli-cate ears be deafened by the shrieks and wailings of despair and the weep-ing implorations that rise up in ever greater rage from every side. Go! lest your luminous eyes be blinded by the sight of our wounds and the cracked, swollen skin of our bellies, by the flies and worms crawling over the butchered bodies of men. You're not used to this. In Heaven there are no screams, no tears, no wars; no prisons, no hanged men, no women sullied by rape. No hunger, no famine, no men and women who must earn their bread by the sweat of their brows and the breaking of their bodies; no children who never learned to smile, no moth-ers darkened with grief, no one suffer-ing to expiate original sin. Go from here!

Fo's closing image is of Mary's anger. We see no Resurrection. The last lines be-long to the angel, an immortal creature who begs the mortal woman's forgive-ness for his inability to understand.

GABRIEL: . . . I have come only to re-



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mind thee that it is just that wordless song of thy tears, this tuneless lament unable to well up in a releasing sob—this sacrifice which thou hast made together with thy beloved child, that all of these shall rend the very fabric of Heaven, and at last tear it wide enough to let the masses of waiting mankind find refuge for the first time in Paradise.

FO IS UNUSUAL in that he became more radical as he grew older, and was rewarded with larger audiences for his drift into the political margins. During the 1970s he moved to the left of the Italian Communist Party, which was slow to support the student, feminist, and environmental movements. At the same time, his collaboration with Rame became increasingly full. A remarkable performer, Rame has greater range as an actor than her husband, although she is less gifted at mime. With Fo she wrote her own show, *Tutta casa letto e chiesa* (literally, *She's All Church, Home, and Bed*, 1977), a series of dark, violent sketches for a single performer about the condition of women. Like the traveling theatrical families of the past—and Rame's own family—the couple toured Italy, Rame performing *Tutta casa* one day and *Fo Mistero Buffo* the next.

They also worked together on several "throwaway" farces, whose loose plots they changed regularly to mirror the changing Italian political scene—creating, in the process, a style of political theater that is quite unlike most of what goes by that name in this country. A typical evening with Fo will more than likely begin with the playwright ambling onstage before the houselights go down. He'll have a local newspaper in his hand and be ready to tell a few stories about the genesis of the script, the events of the day, and what he is hoping to accomplish. There may be a few jokes, there may not—Fo will be easing the audience into the context of the evening's entertainment. One by one the other players will enter behind him. Gradually, when the mood feels right, Fo's monologue will glide into the play proper. The spirit of improvisation reigns: when the English invaded the Falkland Islands, Fo entirely rewrote the play he was doing within twenty-four hours. In performance, the day after the war started, the actors read from pieces of paper covered with Fo's angular handwriting. The show was anything but polished, but it was dazzlingly alive.

These rough, open-ended plays have

been popular in many different countries. One, *Morte accidentale di un anarchico* (*Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, 1971), has been done, Fo says, by 1,300 companies, in Europe, Asia, and North and South America.

Accidental Death was written about what Italians refer to as the "strategy of tension": a scheme carried out during the early 1970s by right-wing extremists in the military and secret services to discredit the Italian Communist Party by staging a number of "leftist" bombings. The most notorious of these incidents occurred in Milan, where scores of people were killed or maimed by a blast in a crowded bank. A coven of rather foolish anarchists was framed for the crime, but the whole business came unraveled after one member of the group was chucked out of a high window in a police station during an interrogation. The subsequent cover-ups, inquests, re-coverups, and trials lasted for years, aroused great public ire, and ended in the disbanding of the Italian intelligence service.

At the height of the affair Fo wrote *Accidental Death*, in which a medieval-style Maniac runs amok in the police station where the anarchist was murdered. The Maniac, afflicted with a lunatic penchant for disguising himself—playing, he says, "the theater of the real"—impersonates the prosecutor conducting the inquest, a Strangelovian explosives expert, and, hilariously, a bishop; there is much foofaraw involving those tried-and-true sources of laughter, glass eyes and wooden limbs. The script changed daily to capitalize on the affair's latest revelations. The play never really ended; its final act was, in fact, discussion with the audience. Fo played the role of the Maniac for four years, before huge audiences (those who couldn't get tickets would listen to the show free over loudspeakers), and rewrote the ending four times to keep up with events and to avoid getting bored.

Despite its specifically Italian context, *Accidental Death* was a big hit in London, as were several other Fo farces. Last winter, on the heels of Fo's success there, the English publishing company Methuen produced the first English-language book about Fo—*Dario Fo: People's Court Jester*, by Tony Mitchell.

Some of Fo's plays have been done in this country, reflecting the American proclivity for remounting anything that has ever appeared on an English stage. Adaptations of *Accidental Death* have appeared in Los Angeles, San Francisco,

and Washington, D.C., and the show opened on Broadway last season to critical broadsides. With actors and script strapped into a glitzy straitjacket—there was no room at all for improvisation—the play was a thorough disaster. A few weeks before the play closed, mutterings were heard in the producers' office that the flop of *Accidental Death* might ensure that Americans would not see Fo's plays for years to come. Given the economics of the theater industry, that prediction could well be right.

ONE REASON FOR Fo's lack of recognition in this country is the repeated refusal of the U.S. Naturalization and Immigration Service, until late last year, to give Fo and Rame an entrance visa. Another reason is the slowness with which foreign dramatists catch on in this country. For example, playwrights Thomas Bernhard of Austria and Franz Xavier Kroetz of Germany, well known throughout Europe, have been discovered by American producers only recently; even Luigi Pirandello and the late Edoardo de Filippo have never been translated in full.

But most of the difficulty has to do with the staggering cost of mounting theatrical productions, especially in New York City. Fo's original production of *Accidental Death* cost something like two hundred dollars; the Broadway version cost about half a million dollars. The many smaller theaters that have heretofore kept the American stage going are under intense financial pressure, owing largely to cutbacks in federal support. Regional companies that in the past could afford to do an untried, unknown, or unexpected play are losing the margin to gamble. Because nobody can afford to fail, nobody can afford to experiment.

Despite these obstacles, however, one of the more exciting theatrical movements since the Second World War is taking place now, in a direction parallel to Fo's. Often called the New Vaudeville, this collection of artists includes such performers as the mime Bill Irwin, who had a minor role in the Broadway production of *Accidental Death*; the Flying Karamazov Brothers, a troupe of jugglers who recently starred in Robert Woodruff's circus version of *The Comedy of Errors*, in Chicago; the magicians Penn and Teller; and a variety of other players, all of whom combine elements of circus acts, performance art, burlesque, and the icy sensibility usually

called post-modern. Many of these performers come from San Francisco, where the San Francisco Mime Troupe has been lampooning and lambasting the American establishment for more than a quarter-century.

Irwin says that he thinks there is a hunger in audiences to see stage magic, to be entranced by the skill of a juggler or a mime, to watch people perform as well as act: witness the crowds that gather around break-dancers on the sidewalks outside office buildings in many American cities. Spectators are transfixed when Teller is wrapped in a straitjacket and hung upside-down over a bed of huge nails, racing to extricate himself from his bonds before Penn finishes reading "Casey at the Bat" at top speed. The sight is superbly, profoundly theatrical. No movie could duplicate the special mixture of humor and fear that comes from watching real human beings do the wonderful and apparently impossible.

Yet despite the vivacity, humor, and post-modernist edge of the New Vaudeville shows, they can be thin. At their worst they bring to mind the reason why the old vaudeville died, which is that its canon of gags and routines stopped growing and audiences lost interest. Fo's exploitation of medieval theater is similar in many ways to the recent revival of turn-of-the-century American vaudeville. The difference is that his work is informed by an overarching political and social vision; his craft serves that vision rather than standing alone. Evolving a battery of techniques to enlarge the imaginative confines of the proscenium stage, he has found a way to link the quintessentially theatrical delights of storytelling and visual humor to the daily lives of his audience, and to do so without didacticism.

The best way for Americans to experience the special pleasure of Fo's art is to see the playwright perform, and so far that has been impossible here. However, Yale University has invited Fo and Rame to appear in its repertory theater next winter. The couple is considering a national tour. They have said that they would like to play in small, regional theaters all over the country. Fo believes that the popular nature of his work and the universal appeal of low humor will allow audiences here to understand what he's trying to say. One waits with curiosity to see what contemporary Americans make of the medieval mime in their midst. □

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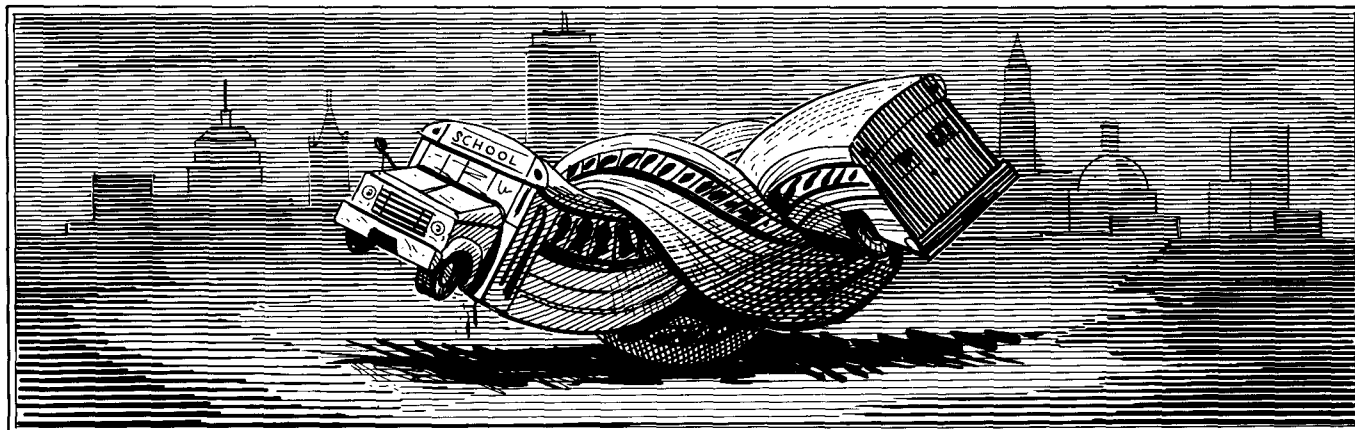
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BOOKS



RACE, CLASS, AND THE CITY

BY JACK BEATTY

COMMON GROUND

by J. Anthony Lukas.

Knopf, \$19.95.

THE BUSES STARTED to roll on the first day of school more than two years after a group of black parents sued the Boston School Committee, and three months after W. Arthur Garrity, a federal judge, ruled that the committee had deliberately segregated schools by race. Partly out of geographic necessity and partly out of bureaucratic arrogance, the state-formulated desegregation plan adopted by Judge Garrity called for a heavy exchange of students between black Roxbury and white ethnic South Boston. This was a plan for social catastrophe. It came on September 12, 1974, as buses carrying blacks to South Boston were met by white mobs shouting "Niggers, go home!" and pelted with beer bottles and rocks. A few days later white teenagers attacked blacks waiting at a city subway station, and racial brawls broke out in two high school cafeterias. In early October a Haitian-born maintenance man, on his way to pick up his wife from her job at a South Boston laundry, was hauled from his car by neighborhood whites and beaten with a hammer and a sawed-off hockey stick. Apparently in retaliation, the next day mobs of black teenagers stoned white motorists passing through Roxbury, pulled several from their cars, and beat them. With the city seemingly

on the verge of a race war, Governor Francis W. Sargent called out the National Guard. What the press quickly labeled "the Boston busing crisis" had begun; for at least the next six years racial violence would continue to crackle and flare in the city's high schools.

The busing crisis forms the backdrop of *Common Ground*. A Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter formerly with *The New York Times*, J. Anthony Lukas has written a book that will lose none of its pertinency as long as our cities remain so starkly divided by color and class. Lukas worked on *Common Ground* for more than six years, and it shows in his exacting reportage. He balances thick detail with a subtle development of themes—the tension between equality and community, for example—a willingness to venture interpretations, and a delicate skill in biographical portraiture. If *Common Ground* has some of the formlessness of modern cities, it has more of their variety. It is a big book, and potential readers may fear that it will tell them more than they want to know about Boston. And so it may. Still, just as novels about strikingly individual people contain glints of truth about all of our lives, so *Common Ground* lights up not only Boston's particular troubles but the generic troubles of the American city—poverty, racism, crime, decaying public housing, poor public schools, racial polarization, and the destruction of old neighborhoods by new money and those puissant forms of intervention the federal bulldozer and the federal writ.

LUKAS'S SUBTITLE IS *A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families*, and his chapter-length accounts of these families are interspersed

with biographies of five public figures who played leading roles in the busing crisis: Louise Day Hicks, the South Boston-born School Committee chairwoman, who began as a school reformer, became a national symbol of resistance to busing when she twice ran for mayor, and then was outdistanced by the political dynamics she had set in motion, as more-extreme opponents of busing took control of her movement; Judge Garrity, a former aide to John F. Kennedy, whom Lukas depicts as torn between fear of ostracism by his own kind and a damn-the-consequences devotion to the rule of law; the late Cardinal Humberto Medeiros, Boston's Portuguese-born archbishop, a lonely figure in an Irish city, whose support of busing, ambiguous though it was, made him lonelier still; Thomas W. Winship, the editor of the liberal, pro-busing *Boston Globe*, whose part in the busing crisis is memorialized on a bumper sticker often seen in South Boston—NUKE THE GLOBE; and, finally, the largest presence in Boston's politics through these years, Kevin H. White, the mayor of Boston from 1968 to 1983. White, who was nearly picked as George McGovern's running mate in 1972, set about positioning himself for the 1976 presidential nomination. That hope vanished the day busing began.

These five chapters are rich in insights and information (some of it recondite: Lukas gives the institutional histories of the Boston School Committee, the Archdiocese of Boston, and *The Boston Globe*, and by some alchemy contrives to make these fusty annals interesting). However, the compelling family histories are the center of the book. The McGoffs are a large Irish family from Charlestown, a white, working-class

neighborhood of Boston; the Twymons, a black family from Roxbury and the South End; the Divers, an upper-middle-class family from the comfortable Boston suburb of Lexington who moved to the South End out of sixties idealism, in order to live in an integrated neighborhood. Like a Balzac of Boston, Lukas, over hundreds of pages, moves from one family to another as they face the varied problems that give them common ground.

His most controversial choice is the Twymons. Not that anyone could object to his portrait of Rachel Twymon. Abandoned by her husband, afflicted with lupus, Rachel is an indomitable woman, sustained by a strong Methodist faith and by a generous civic vision of whites and blacks living together in harmony and even affection. On welfare in the intervals when she is disabled by her illness, she shows an admirable tenacity as she tries to raise her six children in the image of her own righteousness. And fails, one child getting pregnant at thirteen, two other children turning to thievery, yet another child to rape.

"Why did Lukas have to pick a black family who embody everything that whites fear about poor ghetto blacks?" a friend asked me after I told her the Twymons' story. I can only guess at the answer. Perhaps he did so to bring home the sordid realities of underclass life to a nation grown complacent about urban poverty. And perhaps it was to make the reader grasp why education is so important to families like the Twymons and why the separate but manifestly unequal Boston schools were such a blight on black hopes.

Cruelly, the newly integrated schools were no better. Bused to Charlestown High in September, 1975, in Phase II of Arthur Garrity's desegregation plan, fifteen-year-old Cassandra Twymon was not rising in the world but falling into a kind of hell. "Throw them a banana, Tarzan," she heard one white classmate remark on her first day of school. "Anybody smell something peculiar in here?" whispered another. Worse was to come in the months ahead.

Among the white students who watched Cassandra get off the bus that day were Kevin and Lisa McGoff. Kevin, who was then in his senior year, would avoid the vortex of the busing controversy by participating in sports; Lisa, a junior, would become a leader of the anti-busing cause and, ultimately, a fair-minded president of the class of

1977. Her growing tacit acceptance of the black students is the most hopeful portent that Lukas records—a victory of normal adolescent concerns with proms and dating over commitment to a stern politics of grievance.

His narrative of the Twymons takes Lukas back to the slave plantations of the antebellum South. Similarly, his account of the McGoffs traces their roots in Ireland and tracks their life in a nineteenth-century Boston inhospitable to the Irish. Slowly, by a widening of perspective, their story becomes that of Charlestown. A Puritan enclave in the seventeenth century, the site of the Battle of Bunker Hill in the eighteenth century, by the early twentieth century Charlestown had become an Irish Catholic ghetto. Fronted until 1972 by a clattering elevated railway that ran right down the main street, girded by an expressway built to speed suburbanites into Boston, and cut off from the rest of the city by the Charles River basin, Charlestown was a place apart. Its working-class "Townies" valued "community above achievement, solidarity over mobility." They couldn't abide the proximity of black children to their children, Lukas suggests, because there was so little economic and social distance between the two groups. Whether you call it prejudice or "status anxiety," the Townies had a bad case of it.

Alice McGoff is a Townie. Widowed in her thirties, the mother of seven children, she is cut from the same moral oak as Rachel Twymon. Alice raised her children in the Charlestown public-housing project (where, in a less racially polarized time, some of her neighbors were black). By no means a racist (she voted for Kevin White, not Louise Day Hicks, in the 1967 mayoral elections), Alice McGoff through the first year of busing

grew progressively angrier at the power, wealth, and privilege arrayed against her. An unelected judge, an unresponsive senator, and uncaring suburban liberals had joined hands to wrest from her the one thing in the world over which she exercised some control: her family.

She would not allow her children to be bused. Even before the buses arrived at Charlestown High, she had joined the local anti-busing movement, participating in prayer marches and demonstrations aimed at changing the minds of Judge Garrity, Senator Kennedy, Kevin White, and Tip O'Neill—all to no avail.

Tip O'Neill was Charlestown's longtime congressman; his refusal to support a constitutional amendment banning busing was an especially hard blow. "The break with Tip severed a last, critical link with the Democratic Party," Lukas writes, in a politically resonant sentence.

Having forced racial reform on the South in the 1960s, northern liberals like O'Neill and Kennedy (whose brother John had been O'Neill's predecessor as Charlestown's congressman) could hardly shrink from supporting the same cause in their own back yard a decade later. They were trapped by what John Kennedy and, through him and Lyndon Johnson, the Democratic Party had become in the 1960s, and by a judge's decision that left them no room to maneuver politically or to devise the kind of legislative half-remedy that obscures issues of principle with deals and compromises that disgust the moralist but preserve social peace while promoting social change.

ON APRIL 9, 1968, the day Martin Luther King, Jr., was buried in Atlanta, Kevin White spoke at the annual banquet of the *Harvard Law Review*. "The time has come," he told the graduating lawyers, "for me after one hundred days in office, and for this nation after one hundred years, to put, as Lincoln did, the preservation of the Union above all else, the creation of a single society of white and black above all else. This is our commitment in Boston. I need your assistance. I hope there are those here among you, among the very best young lawyers America has produced, who will choose to join us in this commitment." Colin Diver, a member of the *Law Review* staff, took Kevin White literally. After graduating that June he declined the offer of a lucrative job in a Washington law firm to take a minor post in the White administration. Drawn by Kevin White's dream of a city united across racial lines, he and his wife, Joan, the director of a progressive philanthropic foundation, moved to Boston's multi-class, multiracial urban frontier, the South End.

Lukas's chapters on the Divers detail Colin's growing disillusionment first with Kevin White, as the Mayor tacked toward the white backlash of the early 1970s and as his quest for higher office distracted him from his job, and then with life in the South End—because of the struggle to reclaim the local public school from a rigid school bureaucracy,

because of busing (only Colin's political clout kept young Brad Diver, already in an integrated neighborhood school, from being bused to Roxbury), because of rising class and racial tensions, and above all because of crime.

Every morning as Joan Diver left their renovated Victorian town house, she would wave to a vacant window, "hoping to persuade anyone who might be watching that the house was occupied." Every evening she and Colin would join their neighbors in patrolling the nearby streets and alleys. And still the muggers came. One night, after breaking a baseball bat over the head of a fleeing street criminal, Colin suddenly saw what was happening to his family.

Nearly a decade before, he'd moved into the city to help bring racial justice to Boston. Now he was rushing out of his house to hit dark-skinned people over the head. Before him on the kitchen table lay his boyhood bat, splintered beyond all further use. Some of his cherished assumptions were in smithereens as well.

The book ends with the Divers moving out of the South End to suburban Newton, leaving the city to Alice McGoff and their former neighbor, Rachel Twymon, whom they never met.

At first the Divers had supported Arthur Garrity's decision, but gradually they began to wonder whether Garrity's remedy—widespread cross-city busing—"hadn't finally set back the very cause it was designed to advance." The figures on student enrollment in the Boston public schools support these doubts. In 1972, when Garrity first began hearing the busing case, 60 percent of the school population was white. By 1976 the percentage was 44. Today it is 27. (Whites make up, as they did in 1972, more than two thirds of Boston's population.) Over that same period total enrollment declined from 90,000 to 55,000. More blacks are in the system today than were a decade ago, but there are dramatically fewer whites to mix them with. A plan designed to desegregate the schools has helped to resegregate them.

Only those who believe that "Let justice be done though the heavens fall" is a sound formula for social policy can think such a plan a wise one or view the results of a decade of busing in Boston as a triumph of juridical liberalism. The life of the law is experience, Justice Holmes said, putting pragmatism into a

sort of slogan; and experience condemns Arthur Garrity's decision just as it supports the similar decisions of other federal judges in cities like Buffalo and Charlotte, where court-ordered busing did not lead to self-defeating white flight from the public schools. If busing succeeded in promoting integration in these cities, why did it fail in Boston, and what is the broader significance of that failure?

LUKAS DOES NOT address those questions directly, but his book provides the makings of several answers. Here then, with Lukas's help, are three lessons of the Boston busing crisis.

First, *values*. Judge Garrity approached the busing case as if it were a conflict between right and wrong, the former represented by the black families who sued the School Committee because their children were receiving a segregated (and so unequal) education in the Boston schools, the latter by the white neighborhoods that would eventually defy his court order and by the committee, whose zoning and school-assignment policies had made the worst of the choices left it by the city's segregated housing patterns. While Lukas holds no brief for the odious School Committee of the day, his perspective on the white neighborhoods that were served by the committee's machinations is morally more complicated. For Lukas, the busing crisis was a conflict not between right and wrong but between two rights—equality and community. These values have been at odds throughout American history, he argues, and they were crystallized in the Lincoln-Douglas debates, with Lincoln arguing that the essence of democratic government was "the equality of men" and Stephen Douglas insisting that it was the primacy of "popular sovereignty"—the right of communities like Charlestown to control their own local institutions.

Morally, Lincoln's argument is unanswerable, chiefly because the local institution Douglas wanted to protect was slavery. But is the "neighborhood school" such a clearly iniquitous institution? It is hard to think so. Community is a prickly, irrational value, all mixed up with prejudice and xenophobia. Nonetheless, it has undeniable moral dignity and, in our anomic mass society, irreplaceable social utility as an antidote to loneliness, a stay against alienation and despair. Equality, too, has great moral authority, but it may be a piece of senti-

mentality to suppose that conflicts between two such central values can be reconciled by appeal to a higher value that embraces them both. The moral universe is irreducibly pluralistic; within it right will be in conflict with right—equality with community, liberty with equality, justice with culture—from here to eternity. That is why tragedy is a permanent feature of the human condition and why in any conflict of ultimate values the sum of good in the world is diminished.

Some such tragic perspective on the values at stake in the busing case might have led to a wiser policy. Out of deference to community mores, for example, integration could have proceeded more slowly, affecting only the lower grades at first, and allowing threatened neighborhoods to adjust to the inexorability of change. In this case justice delayed might have been justice fulfilled.

Second, *the economic context*. The busing crisis coincided with a severe recession; unemployment in Massachusetts was approaching 15 percent the day the buses rolled to Charlestown High. Status anxiety among the approximately 33,000 jobless in Boston was high; so was resentment at civil-service affirmative-action programs, which were seen as encroaching on a traditional preserve of Boston's working-class whites. Moreover, even in the best of times Boston is a poor city: at the last census it ranked twenty-sixth out of thirty major U.S. cities in median household income (\$12,530). These short-term and structural features of the Boston economy do not excuse the violent manifestations of white racism. After all, even poor people are obliged to respect the rights of others; to ascribe their behavior to their economic status is to reduce character to condition and to treat morality as if it were contingent upon cash. Still, one can defend the idea of moral autonomy and recognize that a recession is a singularly bad time to mount a social experiment on the scale of the busing decision.

Today, thanks to a boom economy in Massachusetts and to employment programs begun by Kevin White and extended by his successor, Raymond Flynn, Boston does not have a severe unemployment problem. Coincidentally, its racial climate has also improved a good deal. As many black leaders concede, this is owing partly to Mayor Flynn's healing symbolic leadership, but it is also partly because of a greater sense of economic security among Boston's

whites. A second lesson of the busing crisis, then, is that social reform has a hard underlying economic logic that jurists or social planners ignore only at the price of failure.

Third, *class*. Because class consciousness never took hold in America and because our political parties no longer divide neatly along class lines, as they did during the Depression (Ronald Reagan carried South Boston, where the median household income is \$10,149, in both 1980 and 1984), it is easy to think that class is no longer a relevant explanatory category in America. This notion gains support from surveys showing that even rich and poor Americans tend to identify themselves as "middle class." But the ubiquity of middle-class norms and aspirations should not blind us to the persistence of class inequality in America. Do the Lisa McGoffs and the Cassandra Twymons of this country enjoy the same life chances as its Brad Divers? Clearly, no. That difference in life chances is the difference money makes. We all take comfort from heartening anecdotes about "mobility," but the melancholy statistical fact remains that the distribution of income has barely changed since the Second World War.

If you wanted the Lisa McGoffs and Cassandra Twymons of the country to have a fair chance in life with its Brad Divers, then you would probably try to mix them in the same school. (Sartre said that he became cultured by imitating cultured people—and I think the same principle applies to social mobility: for those of us not born into the middle class, exposure to its exemplars among our peers is a crucial social event, one fraught with pain and hope, self-disgust and self-discovery.) Brad's securely middle-class outlook might rub off on his poorer classmates, and his parents would certainly think themselves important enough to demand that he get a first-rate education. You'd hope that Lisa and Cassandra would start to want what Brad wants—competence with a musical instrument, say, or more-advanced study in geology—and you would see to it that what Brad got through private advantage, Lisa and Cassandra could get through public expenditure. You'd be investing in equality, betting that the economy would grow as kids like Lisa and Cassandra parlayed better educations into better jobs.

But none of this would be possible if you did not have a leaven of Brads to mix with the Lisas and the Cassandras.

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Increasingly, the Brads of the country are either in private schools or in fine suburban public-school systems like those of Newton, where the median household income, according to the 1980 census, was \$26,663, and Arthur Garrity's Wellesley, where it was \$32,547, nearly three times that of Boston. In many cities the Lisas and Casandras now attend school together, but this mixing of the black and white poor cannot be what the Supreme Court had in mind, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, when it outlawed racial segregation on the grounds that "to separate [black children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." For the point of the social-science evidence that the justices appealed to was surely not that the whiteness of the white students would have a beneficial effect upon black students—to believe that would be to accept the idea of racial superiority. It was that something of the social power, the ease and relatively greater confidence and expectations of the white students, would light a spark of social hope in the blacks. When segregation by class replaces segregation by race, this premise no longer holds, and the educational results can only be damaging to whites and blacks alike.

If a five-to-four Supreme Court decision (*Milliken v. Bradley*) handed down a month before Judge Garrity's ruling had gone the other way, Boston's middle-class suburbs could have been included in Garrity's plan and school desegregation would not have stopped, in Lukas's words, "at the city line." A reversal of that decision, though unlikely, might hasten the end of racial segregation, but what can be done about the new class segregation in city schools? Calls for a "renaissance" of quality in public education won't by themselves draw the children of urban gentrifiers to the public schools, and they won't lure the Brad Divers back into the city. A final lesson to be learned from the Boston busing crisis is that while our society has instruments for remedying some of the inequalities stemming from race—often rough and counterproductive instruments, like Judge Garrity's court order—it has neither the public language nor the policy instruments to identify and ameliorate inequalities stemming from class. □

EAR VERSUS MIND

BY WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

THE AESTHETICS OF SURVIVAL:

A Composer's View of
Twentieth-Century Music
by George Rochberg.

The University of Michigan Press, \$18.00.

ANYONE WHO VENTURES to suggest in April that something has gone badly wrong with "serious" or "concert" music in the twentieth century is certain to receive letters of protest that express not merely the disagreement appropriate to matters of taste but moral indignation and even outrage as well. Anyone, on the other hand, who made a parallel suggestion, this late in the day, about twentieth-century literature or painting would simply be laughed at and dismissed.

Thirty-five years ago, when proselytizing books, most prominent among them René Leibowitz's *Schoenberg and His School*, began to reach this country in English translation, it seemed plausible to insist that just as the educated public was coming to understand and embrace the novels of Proust and Joyce, and the paintings of Picasso and Matisse, so it would, given time and instruction, understand and embrace the music of Schoenberg, the high priest of musical modernism. But this has not come to pass. The people who flock to Picasso retrospectives and reread *Ulysses* for pleasure do not, the vast majority of

them, turn out to hear the late works of Schoenberg, the works that were supposed to point the way to the music of the future. Or if they do, it is as a matter of duty, out of fear of being—hateful thought!—conservative, or even reactionary. A few works by Schoenberg's pupils Berg and Webern have made their way into the permanent repertory, but of Schoenberg himself most people care to hear only such early works as *Verklärte Nacht* and *Pierrot Lunaire*. These were written a decade or more before Schoenberg formulated and began to practice his famous "method for composing with twelve tones related only to one another," popularly known as the twelve-tone method. The two twentieth-century composers who have worn best are Stravinsky and Bartók, both of whom were long castigated by the Schoenbergian avant-garde for their refusal to fall in step with the inexorable march of history.

The present collection of writings by the well-known composer George Rochberg is an indispensable book for anyone who wishes to understand the sad and curious fate of music in the twentieth century. Rochberg, a highly articulate essayist with extensive experience both as a teacher and as a publisher's music editor, has had just the sort of compositional career that puts him in a position to speak with unique authority about this subject. Born in 1918, he started out as a follower of Stravinsky and Bartók, converted to twelve-tone (or "serial") music in about 1950, and then, a decade or so later (and with great pain and self-doubt), abandoned serialism to return to tonal music, in a modified and enriched version. There is much in *The Aesthetics of Survival* to put off the intelligent and interested reader: half-assimilated philosophy, sweeping cultural generalizations that don't bear scrutiny, even a dash of mysticism. But whenever Rochberg turns his attention to musical particulars, he is excitingly illuminating. And even the philosophical and cultural disquisitions are so earnest and well intentioned, so utterly free of any desire to impress, that one readily forgives them and reads on. Unfortunately, the essays included, which span the years 1955 to 1982, have been rather awkwardly arranged under topics: they should instead be read in chronological order, for the fascinating story they tell is most easily grasped if one follows Rochberg's thought as it evolved.

Unlike most serialist composers,



Rochberg never surrendered the traditional conviction that the value of music is directly dependent on its aural intelligibility as apprehended in performance—rather than on, say, the rational intelligibility of some pre-compositional system such as the twelve-tone method. “Music,” he wrote in 1955, “has always been a matter of commanding attention and maintaining interest through clear organization.” At that time the twelve-tone method still seemed to him capable of creating “a sense of aural orientation which, though not tonal in the old sense, defines an area for clear aural perception—which is, in essence, what the traditional system of tonality also accomplished.”

Rochberg was also unlike most post-war serialists in taking Schoenberg, rather than Webern, as his model. “It is rhythm,” he wrote in 1955, “autonomous of pitch, which gives plasticity shape, and life to music, regardless of the nature of the pitch material, whether tonal or nontonal, determinate or indeterminate.” Even in Schoenberg’s most relentlessly nontonal music, Rochberg insisted, rhythm is used “in the traditional formal sense—to create proportions,” and is “part and parcel of [Schoenberg’s] dramatic urgency,” of “his essentially dramatic view of music.” Webern, on the other hand, “creates a tiny, precious world of thin, wired sounds which spark and crackle occasionally, but which, for the most part, possess a feeling of *already completed action*. This develops an overall feeling of ‘motionless motion,’ perfect equilibrium, a static, suspended moment of time.” This “suppression of pulsation,” which resulted in the loss of an audible sense of direction, effected what Rochberg finely terms a “*spatialization* of music,” a “precarious balance” that he believes Webern’s followers were unable to maintain.

GRADUALLY ROCHBERG lost his confidence in the autonomy of rhythm and, therefore, in the ability of the twelve-tone method, even as practiced by Schoenberg, to provide the sense of direction necessary for aural intelligibility. In his longest essay, “The Concepts of Musical Time and Space” (1963), Rochberg brilliantly uses contrasting examples from Mahler and Schoenberg to demonstrate “the inability of a nontonal melody to develop a predictable pattern of pitches, to be able to signal, as it were, what tone follows next along the melodic axis.” Hence nontonal melo-

Love in a cold climate



An encounter in a Tokyo bar launched John David Morley into the “water trade”—the underworld of bars and geisha girls—and into the arms of the sensuous and mad-deningly elusive Mariko. Their passion, played out in the hostile climate of a small town, is one of the elements which makes this moving and comic book the most fascinating exploration of an alien culture since Bruce Chatwin’s *IN PATAGONIA*.

“Utterly original and unexpected... the excitement stayed with me until the end.”
—Jan Morris

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PICTURES FROM THE WATER TRADE

John David Morley

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS
Distributed by Little, Brown and Company

Is Farley Mowat subversive?

On April 23, 1985, U.S. officials cited the McCarran-Walter Act—a piece of 1950’s legislation aimed at dangerous subversives—in refusing to let Canadian writer Farley Mowat enter this country.

The only possible explanation, as *The Baltimore Sun* points out, is that “Farley Mowat is dangerous. He is pro-wolf and, worse, pro-seal and pro-deer. Worse, this man is a writer. Small wonder the Immigration and Naturalization Service proscribed him.”

Not that he’s done anything wrong. “What Mowat *has* done,” observes the editorial page of *The Boston Globe*, “is write a book called *Sea of Slaughter* in which, with both deep feeling and sound documentation, he records the extinction of dozens of species of animal life.”



“Subversive?” asks *The Globe*. “It could be, in the eyes of the bureaucratic guardians of our borders.”

Farley Mowat has been banned. But *Sea of Slaughter*, which *The Seattle Times* describes as “the kind of ‘must’ reading that Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* once was,” refuses to be silenced. As of this writing, it can still be found in your local bookstore.

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS
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dies, regardless of their rhythmic structure, can have only "contour," never "direction."

In 1963 Rochberg was still insisting that Schoenberg's "rationalization of pitch which no longer had tonal associations or meanings" was "historically necessary." But by 1972 he saw the rejection of tonality by Schoenberg and others quite differently:

What was advertised as the "exhaustion of tonality" at the end of the nineteenth century and described by historians, beginning typically with *Tristan* and tracing the demise through the new Viennese school, may simply have been an incapacity on the part of composers to continue to produce a viable tonal music which could stand comparison with the best work of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Increasingly Rochberg has come to believe that the requirements for aural intelligibility can be fulfilled only by music written according to "a musical system which appears to have profound connections with historical tonality."

Nonetheless, Schoenberg has remained a hero for Rochberg. In the 1972 "Reflections on Schoenberg," he accurately describes Schoenberg as a man who "lost touch with the primitive instinct of the musician's ear," who "succumbed to abstraction and rationalization," and who sought "salvation in methodology." Yet his final judgment on Schoenberg's career is that "miraculously he succeeded more than he failed." The loyalty is touching, but the logic is baffling. Rochberg seems finally unwilling (or unable) to admit that Schoenberg's perverse granting of priority to the mind over the ear brought about the failure of his own career, and that it is Schoenberg who is directly responsible for much that is wrong with twentieth-century music. This is one of the two grave faults of this extraordinary book.

The other is Rochberg's failure to understand that what he now sees as the great disaster that has overtaken all the arts in the twentieth century—a kind of "rational madness . . . which delights in manipulation for its own sake" and has produced "forms of art totally devoid of human content"—is really the disaster of music alone. Modernist literature and visual art have not been dominated by any such destructive spirit as Schoenberg's, and as a result they evidence a bracing variety of high achievement not found in music. The abandonment of

tonality, it turns out, was not at all parallel—as it was often said to be—to the abandonment of traditional narrative and poetic forms or of representation in painting. Unlike the writers and painters, the composers threw out the baby with the bath. That it is possible to compose great music that is only very obliquely related to tonality is proved by the example, perhaps unique among living composers, of Elliott Carter. Yet Carter has always objected to the twelve-tone method and to other, similarly

abstract pre-compositional schemes, for much the same reasons that Rochberg now does. Tonality, even after all these centuries, still proves to be a mysteriously potent organizing force. Some form of tonal implication seems almost to be necessary if music is to satisfy the ear as well as the mind. Finally, a reading of *The Aesthetics of Survival* leaves one feeling that an enlightened conservatism, especially if it is as hard-won as Rochberg's, is perhaps not the worst attitude to adopt toward the music of our time. □

BRIEF REVIEWS



CONFESSIONS OF A CONCIERGE by *Bonnie G. Smith*. Yale, \$14.95. Ms. Smith is the collector and editor, rather than the author, of *Madame Lucie's History of Twentieth-Century France*, and deserves much respect for the tact and patience that enabled her to gather the reminiscences of that very old but still peppery woman. Madame Lucie, concierge of a building in a somewhat seedy section of Paris, was born in Caen during the 1890s, the daughter of a petit-bourgeois couple temporarily on the way up. Their prosperity did not last, nor did that of Lucie's husband. Two world wars, the intervening Depression, and changes in industrial methods put the family two steps back for each step forward, but Madame Lucie's memoirs are by no means a tale of unmitigated woe. Along with cynically humorous comments on politicians and world affairs, she recalls clothes, food, manners, parties, jokes, and scandals. The book becomes a sidewalk-level view of eighty years of French history; it is sometimes familiar, sometimes surprising, and always interesting.

RAYMOND CHANDLER'S UNKNOWN THRILLER by *Raymond Chandler*, edited by *James Pepper*. Mysterious Press, \$15.95. Chandler's screenplay of *Playback*, begun in 1947, was never filmed, so the author cannibalized it into one of his less successful mystery novels. The original script now published is worth reading, first because it is an intriguing thriller with sharp dialogue and a typically mind-addling Chandler plot, and second because it shows so clearly how a scriptwriter, as opposed to a novelist, presents a story. Rob-

ert B. Parker provides a brief, helpful introduction.

KENTUCKY LOVE by *Joe Coomer*. St. Martin's/Marek, \$12.95. It is the voice of Mr. Coomer's narrator that creates the interest in this novel. The events are undergraduate horseplay, lost love, and visits to grandfather's farm, but these commonplace materials are reported by a young man with a humorous turn of phrase and an imagination capable of unexpected leaps and unpredictable perceptions. He is a charmer, and therefore his story charms the reader.

DEATH IN THE OLD COUNTRY by *Eric Wright*. Scribner's, \$12.95. Mr. Wright, a Canadian author of mystery novels, has moved his Toronto policeman to England, where, naturally, Salter becomes involved in a murder case. The necessary puzzle is sound enough, but the real fun lies in Salter's collisions with English protocol, weather, and country inns, all described with eloquent disrespect.

THE HOUSE OF MITFORD by *Jonathan Guinness* with *Catherine Guinness*. Viking, \$22.95. Of the seven Mitfords, Nancy (novelist) converted her relatives into fiction, Jessica (radical journalist) wrote an autobiography, Diana (wife of the English fascist Oswald Mosley) did likewise, and Unity (suicidal Hitler enthusiast) was all too well covered by the English press at its yellowest. This would seem to be quite enough about one family, but Mr. Guinness, Diana's son by her first marriage, thinks otherwise and proves to be right. He has not altogether avoided the

trap that lies in wait for family historians—the temptation to include every available scrap of information no matter how trivial—but he and his daughter Catherine have created a fine group portrait, from eccentric Victorian forebears to brilliant but biased aunts, of a truly remarkable tribe.

HANDEL: THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC by Jonathan Keates. St. Martin's, \$19.95. There were two schools in Halle, Saxony, where Georg Friedrich Handel was born in 1685. It is not known which, if either, he attended, a state of things that Mr. Keates has regularly encountered in pursuit of his subject. Handel appears to have left behind him remarkably little in the way of useful biographical debris—quotable letters, anecdotes, observer's reports, scandals, are all scanty. He once threatened a refractory soprano with defenestration, but that was a matter of music, and where music is concerned, Handel is very well documented indeed. He was respected early and remained influential throughout a long and generally successful career. He was also highly prolific, capable of turning out three operas in a single season and managing the company as well. Mr. Keates assumes that his reader knows enough Handel and enough musical terminology to hear, in imagination, the compositions that he describes, and he describes practically everything that Handel ever wrote. Although the author has done all he reasonably can do with the politics, people, and theatrical methods of the eighteenth century, there is much more music than man in this biography.

INSIDE GOLF: QUOTATIONS ON THE ROYAL AND ANCIENT GAME by Bob Chieger and Pat Sullivan. Atheneum, \$9.95. As the editors of this anthology point out, golfers talk a lot. The editors fail to mention that with a few exceptions, such as Lee Trevino, they do not talk with anything approaching the zany inventiveness Mr. Chieger previously discovered among baseball players.

THE WILLYS DREAM KIT by Jan Novak. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$19.95. Mr. Novak, Czechoslovakian by birth but now living in America, has written a grimly comic novel about a Czech named Jan Svoboda, which is about like being named John Smith or Ivan Ivanovich. Svoboda is a nonconformist by temperament, and to survive in his Communist country he becomes such a thoroughgoing

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tears. The book
that made a
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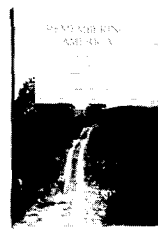
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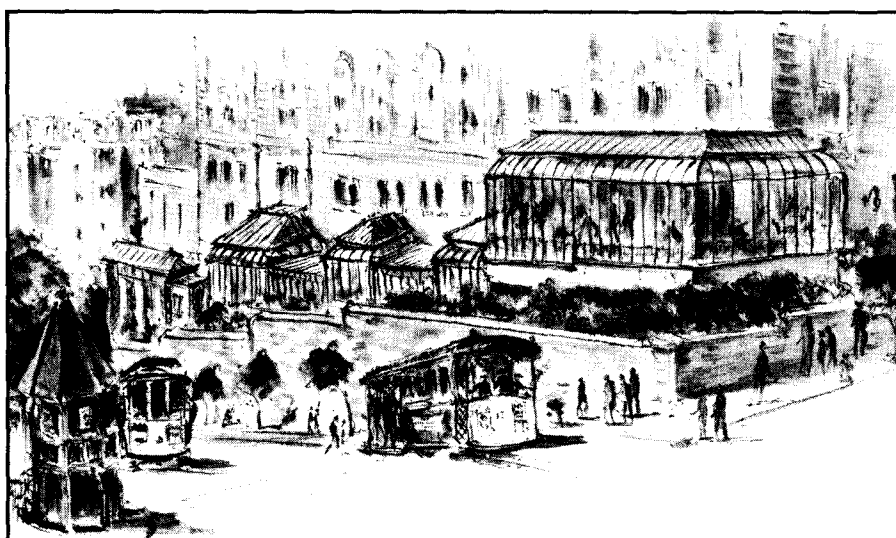
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Answers to the August Puzzles

DOUBLE CROSS

The order of the letters within each diagram square is arbitrary.

Across. 1. BET(A) RAY; MU(STAR)D
7. P(ERIW)IG (wire rev.); SOLD(I)ER
8. CO(LOSS)AL; NE(PALES)E 9. EPSOM
(anag.); C-ALMS 13. F-EAST (eats anag.);
STROP (rev.) 15. RAINCOAT (anag.); AN(A-
CON)D-A 16. APR-I-COT; RETORTS (anag.)
17. SNE(A-K)ER; TICK(ET)S Down. 1. B(AC-
CAR)AT; M(O-NET)ARY 2. SELL (homo-
phone); TOPS (rev.) 3. A-LOOF (fool rev.);
TRAMS (rev.) 4. A-WED; RISE (homophone)
5. YEATS (anag.); DISCO (hidden) 6. AG-
LITTER; TRE(SPA)SS 10. PINES (double def.);
AD-APT 11. STORK (hidden); ME(C)CA (came
anag.) 12. DARN (double def.); Z(IT)-I
14. ROOK (double def.); A-NTE (net anag.)

B	E	T	A	R	A	Y	A	T
M	U	S	T	A	R	D		
O	A	P	E	R	I	W	I	G
	S	O	L	D	I	E	R	
C	O	L	O	S	S	A	L	
N	E	P	A	L	E	S	E	
E	C	A	L	M	S	E	D	C
	P	S	O					I
T	A	I	D	Z	S	F	E	A
								S
R	A	I	N	C	O	A	T	
A	N	P	A	C	O	N	D	A
A	P	R	I	C	O	T	E	S
R	E	T	O	R	T	S		
Y	T	S	N	E	A	K	E	R
								S

ACROSTIC NO. 1

"We're carried in the womb in a positive hubbub—the tom-tom of the heart, the croaking and gurgling of the guts, which must sound like the noise of the rigging on a sailing ship, and a mother's loud laughter. . . . Silence is entirely an acquired taste."

—Robertson Davies, (*The Rebel Angels*)

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scalawag that flight, in the end, is his only safe course. He winds up in Chicago, unreformed and unreformable. Svoboda's progress gives Mr. Novak an opportunity to satirize both Communist and capitalist society, and he slashes these victims vigorously, savagely, and at times hilariously.

BOUND OVER by John van der Zee. Simon and Schuster, \$18.95. Mr. van der Zee believes that indentured servitude, which differed from slavery only in being of temporary duration, was an experience common among the inhabitants of Colonial America and that memory of its miseries provided much of the impetus for the revolutionary insistence on liberty in 1776. The thesis may not be overwhelmingly novel, but the evidence the author presents to support it is unusual and diverting. Mr. van der Zee has collected people—criminals, kidnap victims, the poor or the desperate—who came or were shipped to provide cheap labor in the shorthanded Colonies, and has converted their stories into lively vignettes. Many bond servants perished from disease or overwork, some gained freedom and prospered, some eventually returned to England. The cast of characters includes Thomas Paine and an ancestress of Benjamin Franklin's, but most of the people Mr. van der Zee presents would remain obscure if he had not tracked them down. They are worth meeting.

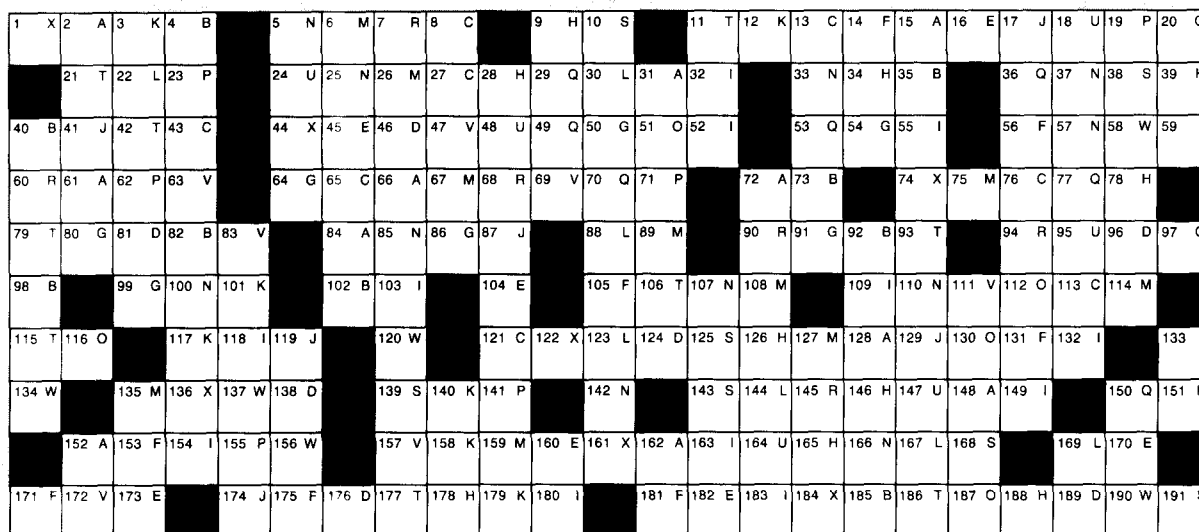
JAPANESE GHOSTS & DEMONS edited by Stephen Addiss. Braziller/Spencer Museum of Art, \$35.00. What with native nuisances like the shape-changing fox and immigrants like Shōki the Demon Queller, who arrived around 1200 but has never given up his elegant Chinese boots, Japan has a rich supply of supernaturals, and artists have been portraying them for centuries. The essays, by various authors, in this handsomely illustrated survey of the *Art of the Supernatural* describe the varieties of ghosts and monsters, discuss their prevalence in the theater, and recount the legends in which they figure. The great popularity of spooks as subjects for artists and playwrights began in Japan in the eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth, possibly because political criticism in spectral terms was something that the government could hardly censor without looking hopelessly silly. Whatever the underlying motive may have been, the art that resulted from it was and is delightful.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

ACROSTIC No. 2

BY DOROTHY OSBORNE

The letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, will spell out a quotation.
The first letters of clue answers spell the author and source of the quotation.



The solution to Acrostic No. 1 appears on page 116.

A. Peking man, c.g.
(2 wds.)

15 72 84 148 66 128 2 61 152 162
31

B. Characterization
for Mel Blanc
(2 wds.)

185 4 92 35 82 73 102 40 98

C. Nolan Ryan forte
(hyph.)

113 13 65 76 43 8 27 121

D. Bright star in Leo

124 81 46 189 138 96 176

E. The beginning of
time (2 wds.)

173 182 104 160 170 45 16

F. Chartbuster for
Danny and the
Juniors (3 wds.)

171 14 181 153 175 105 131 56

G. Part of Scotland's
Caledonian Canal
(2 wds.)

97 91 64 80 54 50 99 86

H. What Esau sold for
pottage

9 39 178 146 78 28 165 126 34 188

I. Author of "Astro-
phel" (2 wds.)

32 180 183 118 163 55 59 103 109 149
52 154 132

J. Formicidae family
member (2 wds.)

17 41 174 129 119 87

K. Ball-shaped
candies

101 117 158 140 151 3 179 12

L. Sasquatch

88 30 167 123 144 22 169

M. Temple on the
Acropolis

127 159 89 135 75 108 26 114 6 67

N. TV quiz show
hosted by Red
Benson (3 wds.)

166 142 5 37 25 57 107 33 133 85
110 100

O. Sartorial expert

130 187 112 20 116 51

P. Adventurous
expedition

71 19 141 62 23 155

Q. Recant (2 wds.)

49 53 70 77 36 150 29

R. Moment of
decision

94 145 60 7 68 90

S. River of New
Hampshire

139 168 38 125 143 191 10

T. Akhenaton's
spouse

42 106 21 93 186 115 11 79 177

U. Game tile

164 24 18 147 48 95

V. Author of *The Four-
Gated City*

63 83 157 69 47 172 111

W. Stream in a gully

120 156 190 134 58 137

X. Make ____ (raise
the roof)

74 1 136 161 184 122 44

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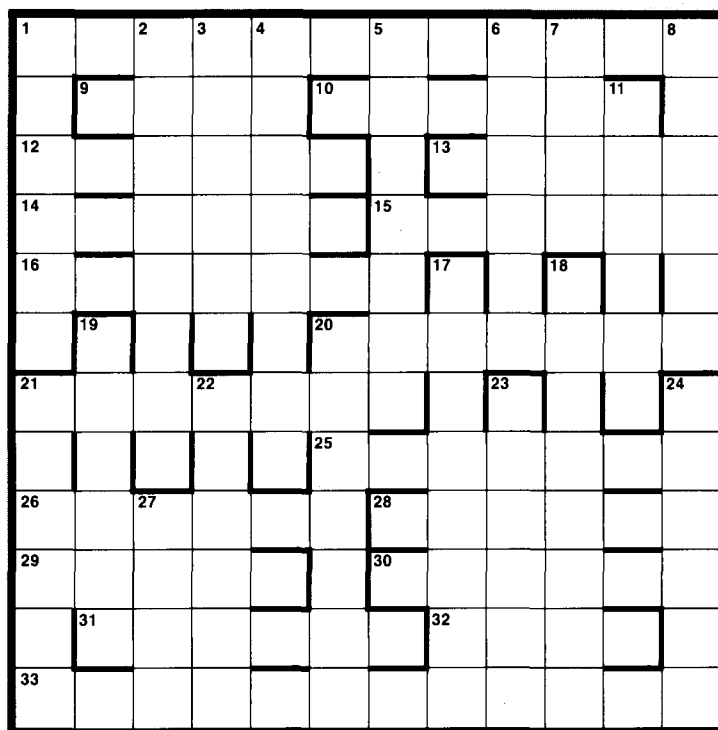
THE PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

SPOONERISMS

In a spoonerism two consonant sounds in a word or phrase are transposed, creating new words. For instance, CLOCKWORK would be WOK CLERK, POURING RAIN would be ROARING PAIN, and SLIP OF THE TONGUE would be TIP OF THE SLUNG. Note that spelling changes appropriately in the newly formed words. In this puzzle one third of the clues (12) must have their *answers* spoonerized before entry in the diagram; another third of the clues are written with spoonerisms occurring in the *definitions* of the answers; the remaining third are normal cryptic clues. Answers to clues include seven proper nouns.

*The answers to last month's
Puzzler appear on page 116.*



ACROSS

1. Some nature lovers scattered rich bedstraw (4,8)
9. Low song brings spies round (4)
10. German wife's muffling duck's first quacks (6)
12. Follower of Donne, say, is running down in springtime (6)
13. Somewhat unsanitary handle for a dame (5)
14. Folks with bad hearts split into smithereens (6)
15. Sighter of many a wrong forest turning (6)
16. A comic learns guile of puns (7)
20. An expert in Tom's Beer Joint (7)
21. Meal course has Dad keeping energy very high (3,4)

25. Quickly moving a left leg and right wheel (7)
26. One sets back tall beam (6)
28. Groovy mate designed a whorl (6)
29. In addition, Eliot floats on a newt (5)
30. Trouser hem having to detach (3,3)
31. We stir fluid for pens (6)
32. Why bears initially skip and jump (4)
33. Star of old comedy burlesque takes on brute (6,6)

DOWN

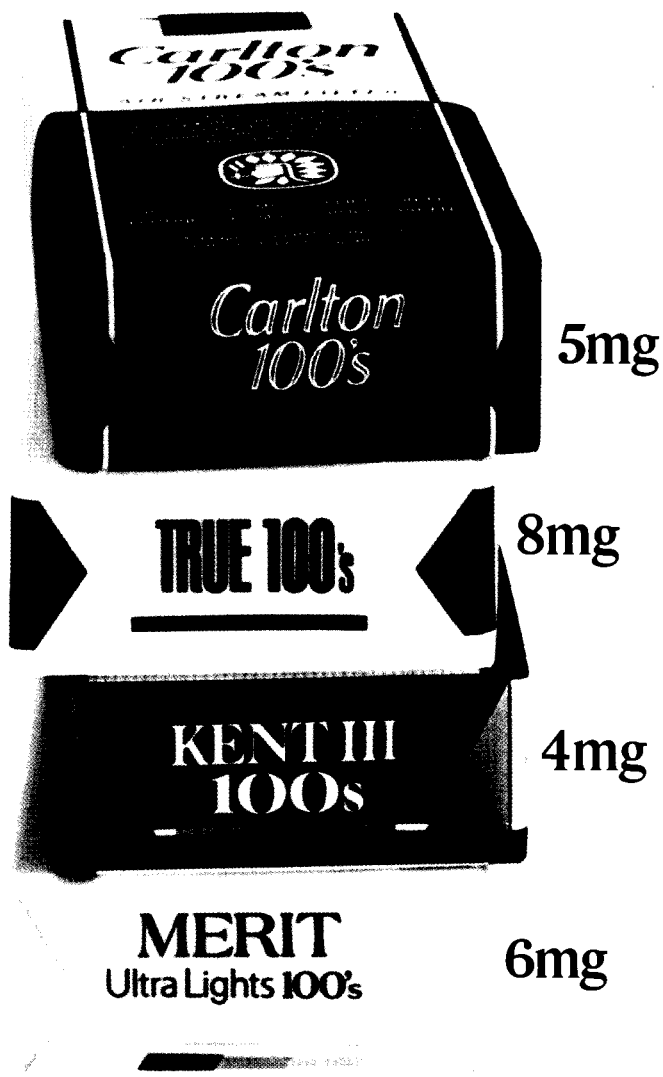
1. Cradle by feast with Burr (6)
2. Sun god swallowed by mean fish (8)
3. Man in court makes parts of columns (6)
4. Need for class's negative remark to be changed to positive remark (8)

5. Florida litigant turned over snare for bugs (7)
6. Bum hunts a cover for the head (3,3)
7. Flow on the rise is correct (4)
8. Mar a blue bug (6)
11. Hot batter may set (6)
17. The Hound of Sands Place in a rest (8)
18. Specialty got Linus mad (4,4)
19. Coe was running with a swimmer (3,3)
20. List includes a pitch-in can (7)
21. Still grubby attics (6)
22. Covering it with a black hole? (3,3)
23. Name of female with dire breath (6)
24. Recalled title of enemy (6)
27. Arbitrator still retains hockey rights (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

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